



SAILOR-BOY
BOB





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SAILOR-BOY BOB.

BY

REV. EDWARD A. RAND,

AUTHOR OF "UP-THE-LADDER CLUB SERIES:" "THE KNIGHTS OF THE
WHITE SHIELD," "THE SCHOOL IN THE LIGHT-HOUSE," "YARD-
STICK AND SCISSORS," "THE CAMP AT SURF BLUFF," AND "OUT
OF THE BREAKERS;" "ART SERIES;" "SCHOOL AND CAMP
SERIES;" "PUSHING AHEAD, OR, BIG BROTHER DAVE,"
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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. CAN GO IF HE WISH.....	5
II. HE CHOOSES TO GO.....	19
III. WANTED, MITTENS.....	32
IV. GETTING HIS SEA-LEGS ON.....	52
V. AT THE WALKER HOME.....	65
VI. ASHORE STILL.....	88
VII. DOWN THE ATLANTIC.....	101
VIII. MIGHT TRY.....	118
IX. ROUND THE NUB OF A CONTINENT.....	136
X. A CLOUD THAT GROWS.....	156
XI. A BREAK IN THE CLOUD.....	168
XII. THERE SHE BLOWS I.....	180
XIII. SOUNDING A MYSTERY.....	193
XIV. THE SHIP MUST BE LIGHTENED.....	208
XV. HOW?.....	224
XVI. ADRIFT.....	242
XVII. A WONDERFUL MEETING.....	275
XVIII. A SAIL! A SAIL!.....	289
XIX. A WRECK THAT WAS NOT A WRECK.....	306
XX. ASSAULT ONE.....	319
XXI. CLIMBING A GENEALOGICAL TREE.....	330
XXII. FROM GOOD TO BETTER, FROM BAD TO WORSE...	345

SAILOR-BOY BOB.

CHAPTER I.

CAN GO IF HE WISH.

“PLEASE say that again, Squire Winthrop,” said Bob Walker, looking up from his spade that he had just thrust into one of the squire’s old-fashioned garden beds.

The squire smiled. “Want to hear it again, Bob? Why, it was not so wonderful. I said if you wanted the chance to go to sea you could have it in the whaler, the *Andromeda*. The same offer is open to my young relative, Ralph.”

Bob could hardly repress his excitement. He lifted his hands from the old spade. He lifted his eyes up to the old clock-dial on the stone church down on the main business-street of Old-buryport. Ten minutes more, and the tired, sleepy hands would be folded at twelve for a moment’s halt and a moment’s nap.

“I—I wish you would let me off now, and I

will make up the ten minutes this afternoon," said Bob, trying to speak deliberately, but feeling somewhat like a volcano that is trying to deliver its lava with dignified composure.

"O₂ you need not make it up, and if you would like to go home now, do so, Bob. That is all right."

"Thank you," said Bob.

Another second, not minute, he was flying out of that old-fashioned garden, Squire Winthrop laughing away quietly as he watched him.

"What a Bob! Didn't go out of the gate, did he? Took a short cut back of the barn!" thought the squire.

"A short cut!" How could Bob possibly have gone home the usual way? It seemed to him as if he would have died on that long route down "Winthrop Court" into Central Street, and then through Parker Street to Spinks's Alley. He went by the shortest possible way. Back of the squire's barn, then through a yard back of a big brick block, into the back door of Shaile's apothecary-store ("Charlie Lambert, the clerk, will let me," reasoned Bob), through the store, out upon Central Street, through Central Street Court, over two fences and through two

vacant lots into Parker Street, and then into Spinks's Alley, on which lived the Walkers in a humble house. He turned the corner of Parker Street and rushed so rapidly into Spinks's Alley that he almost upset fat, puffing Mrs. Bartram, her arms full of bags of candy and peanuts destined for her stand at the corner of Parker and Central.

"Eh—eh—look out, young man!" screamed the one-cent merchant, staggering back from a blow that might have given her a life-long trouble, if it had not been for the barricade of bags in her arms. "Mind who you are hitting!"

"I—I—beg pardon," said Bob, turning to look, but not stopping.

The door of his home was open, and an odor of a fry escaped into the street.

"Fried haddock!" Bob would have said any other day, but to-day his thought was whether it might not be "fried *whale!*" That was the kind of fish now to be borne in mind. Through this opened door, into the entry and then into the sitting-room he rushed, and finally into the kitchen. There before the stove was a girl with a bright, handsome face and a cloud of glossy brown curls. This was Alma, the oldest daugh-

ter — “Alma the beautiful and Alma the blessed,” her father would have said—called Alma because—but I must not stop now to give the reason of her name. Bob wants to speak. I will keep him waiting long enough to say that several young Walkers, male and female, were coming into the kitchen by another door, having just arrived from school. Mrs. Walker sat by an open window for two reasons: to get “a sniff of pure air,” as she declared, and also sniff her camphor-bottle. She was a weakly woman, with the look of a probable invalid. Mr. Sardinus Walker, a man with a rather dark, visionary face, as if he might be fond of contemplative moods, and moods not always hopeful, appeared at a door in a corner. Here it was that the back chamber stairs touched the kitchen floor. His arms were full of shoes that he had been cobbling in the garret. Alma ceased to watch her fish. The school children halted on the threshold, Mrs. Walker let her camphor-bottle fall into her lap, and the burdened cobbler almost dropped his shoes when Bob burst into the kitchen, panting, perspiring, and gasping:

“Folks—folks—I’ve got a—chance to—go—a-whaling—if you—are willing.”

“Got a chance to what?” asked his father in astonishment.

“Dear me! a-whaling?” exclaimed Alma, allowing her fish to burn.

“*You crazy?*” said his mother to Bob.

“I’ll tell—in just—three minutes,” said Bob excitedly, looking round wildly. “I want to go to the wharf. Have dinner ready, wont you, Alma, when—I get back?”

Out of the house Bob rushed again.

“Why, Sardinus,” said Mrs. Walker to her husband, “what does Bob mean?”

“I only know what he said, wife.”

“You haven’t put him up to any thing?” she asked, knowing her husband’s fondness for schemes, and especially one as foolhardy as, to her mind, this going after whales promised to be.

“Why, Cynthia, of course not. What do you mean?” said her husband reprovingly.

“Alma, that fish is burning,” remarked Mrs. Walker, preferring to change the subject.

The daughter did not seem to hear. She stood in the smoky atmosphere, knife and fork in hand, a dazed look in her soft, lustrous eyes.

“Alma, that fish *is* burning,” said her mother, more emphatically.

“O—h—h!” exclaimed the startled girl, returning to her charge. “Bob almost took my senses away. Father, you suppose Bob means that?”

“I don’t know, daughter.”

“I know; and I promise you it will turn out that he has gone down to see that old whaler,” said the mother.

Mrs. Walker’s guess was correct. Bob went to see a sailor acquaintance, Horace Haviland, on board the *Andromeda* which was lying at a near wharf. Bob wished to say this: “Perhaps—perhaps I may go with you. Squire Winthrop says I may; and perhaps Ralph Winthrop may go.”

“Good for you, Bob! ’Twill make a man of you,” replied the weather-beaten sailor, leaning over the freshly painted rail of the *Andromeda*.

“I thought you would like to know,” said the enthusiastic Bob, halting one moment on the wharf. Turning about he ran home.

“Now, Bob, tell us what you mean,” said Alma, as she landed in his plate his share of the burned haddock. “You almost frightened us out of our wits.”

She did not say, "You are responsible for this burned fish." It was not her style.

Bob proceeded to eat his dinner, and at the same time tell what he did mean; what Squire Winthrop said to him, and what he would like to do. Then he waited for the opinion of the family.

"Now I see, Robert," remarked his father. "We can think it over."

"It will need a good deal of thinking, in my opinion," said his mother.

Alma made no remark, but that evening she and Bob stayed in the kitchen when the others had retired, and talked the new project over. It was raining. The night was a chilly one in April, and the two sat by the stove.

"Now, Alma, I suppose you think I am rather rash in my ideas, but I don't believe it is rash, though I know I tumbled in and out of the house this morning like a madman — this noon; I mean. But, you see, I have been thinking. I have got through school. Seventeen, you know, and I really don't know what to do. I don't seem to take to business as yet, and really I can't get a chance to go into a store. There is nothing permanent that seems to offer itself,

no good opening I know of. I believe Stiggins wants a boy—”

“Don’t you go into Stiggins’s even if we have to go to the poor-house,” declared Alma warmly. “He sells rum.”

“I knew you wouldn’t like that. Then I don’t fancy a trade, you know. Really, I have said to myself more than once, ‘Bob, why don’t you try going to sea?’ It is tough, you know. I don’t expect an easy time, but then I must do something. Father, you know—”

“Poor father!” sighed Alma.

“Say,” asked Bob, “where did he get those shoes to mend? Did he pick them up in the neighborhood, and will he get pay for them?”

Alma must have had a bird-cage in her throat, for the canaries seemed to sing when she laughed, and she now laughed heartily.

“They are our children’s shoes, Bob, and I believe he has a pair of yours and mine. He came and held up mine, and said, ‘See, Alma, I have not tried shoemaking since I was a young man, and I am pleased to know I have not lost all my knack yet. Now I don’t think you will have wet feet any longer when it rains, Alma.’ Poor father! Wasn’t he kind? No, he won’t

get any pay for his cobbling, but he will have to pay out money for his stock."

Bob sprang up from his chair and walked about the kitchen.

"There, Alma! That is just what takes hold of me. Seventeen; and I ought to be doing something more than digging Squire Winthrop's garden to-day, and perhaps writing for him to-morrow, and the third day not having a thing to do. Now, if I go off in that whaler, there will be steady wages coming in. Perhaps I can fix it with Squire Winthrop so that the family can have some of my pay and draw it while I am gone. Don't you see, Alma?"

"Yes," said Alma, sorrowfully, fastening her dark eyes on the stove.

"Fire almost out, Alma?"

"Yes," she said laughingly, "every thing is almost out in this house. But there, I do know where one stick more is—out in the back entry. Ted wanted to make a boat of it and pitch it into the dock, and I said, 'No, young man, that is precious.'"

"Good for you, Alma! If it wasn't for you, what would become of us all?"

In a very natural way Alma deprecated this

remark, and said "it was no such thing." Then she added a word for her father—that she believed he would yet get something to do.

"I dare say," remarked Bob; "but then, you know, father hasn't a regular trade or been educated to business. However, we will hope."

That gratified Alma. She abounded in hope, even as the Atlantic Ocean in water. People that were in the depths of any trouble liked to talk with Alma. She could see a light down in the dark pit of their misery if any body could.

"Yes!" she now exclaimed, "father will get something to do, I know. And, Bob, if—if—it is best for you to go whaling, I will make the best of it. How long will you be gone?"

"Well, Captain Granby says that vessels are apt to be gone for several years, but if he can get back in two years or less he would like it."

"O, well, that won't be forever, and we will make the best of it. Any of the Oldburyport boys going with you?"

"Squire Winthrop said Ralph might go."

Alma gave a little start. Bob could not see this, as the kitchen was quite dark. There was no lamp, and for a good reason. The lamps in the house were not numerous, and they

were all up-stairs, and only flashes from the fire in the stove played through the openings in the door upon the uncarpeted floor and low ceiling. No, Bob did not see that little nervous movement by Alma when he said Ralph might go. Alma and Ralph moved in very different circles in society, and only met as Ralph might appear at the Walkers' humble door and inquire for Bob. True, some of the old gossips that had tongues warranted to run forever did say that Ralph called when Bob could not possibly be at home, and that they had seen Alma slyly look at the Winthrops' pew in church. But then Ralph might have an errand with Ted Walker or Billy or Carrie, and as for that church matter, why, Ralph wore a very graceful circular cloak, fashionable in those days, and it naturally would attract the notice of Alma, a girl who liked to see graceful things. Besides, Ralph's fine, classical face had a rather sickly look, for he was not very robust, and this state of things would naturally excite the compassionate interest of a warm-hearted girl like Alma. If there had been any thing significant in Ralph's frequent calls or in Alma's very modest and stealthy glances in church, would not Bob have

noticed it? He certainly suspected nothing. He now remarked :

“Yes, the squire said Ralph might go, and I hope he will.”

“Might” and “could” are two different words, and “could” would have been the proper word here. All that the squire said was that the offer made to Bob was open to Ralph also. Ralph therefore could go, and yet might not. The way Alma understood it, the prospect was that Ralph both could and might go. She breathed a long sigh, but the crackling of the wood in the stove and the drip of the rain on a shelf outside the window smothered the sound of this heavy breathing. She felt that in resigning Bob to the whales she had cast overboard a treasure, and she was now preparing to make another surrender.

“So you see, Alma,” said Bob, returning to the subject of his own course of action, “it is really best—if father and mother are willing—best for me to go, though I know that whaling is any thing but easy work. You wont have my big appetite to satisfy, and my bed to make, and—”

“O, Bob, don’t think it is hard!”

“I know that; but those are facts. Then you’ll have my wages, Alma, and—”

“Ah, that wont be you.”

She paused.

“Well, Bob, we are going to make the best of it, though we shall miss you awfully. Perhaps you had better go to bed now. You know you will have to be up nights watching if you go to sea, and you must get all the sleep you can now.”

Bob went off, saying he felt already like a sailor at sea, but that night he was going to watch with his eyes shut. Alma stayed behind to hear the rain drip on a shelf outside the window, to watch the last of the fire sputter out in darkness, and to—think. There will be time now to explain her name. Her father had once attended an academy. It made a very deep impression on him. He could not see why, like more distinguished men from more distinguished institutions, he could not call the old academy his “*alma mater*.” He was very proud of this title which he had bestowed on the old brick box in a country village. When in the course of time he was married—and married, too, at an earlier date than his income would allow—there

finally came children into the home. The first birth was that of twins. He thought affectionately of the old academy.

"One of these shall be named 'Alma,' and the other 'Mater,'" he said. "Then I shall hear 'Alma Mater' every day."

Thus he laid away in the names of these twins, like gold in ivory, the two words dear to him, meaning bountiful, gracious, kindly and cherishing mother. It was Alma Abbott Walker and Mater Prime Walker. "Alma Mater!" As he saw them side by side, the two names were two links in a short but golden chain. Death came, though, and severed the chain. Mater, the little "mother," was taken away. Alma, the bountiful, the nourishing, and gracious, was left. She was true to the traditions of her name, that night of the talk with Bob. While all others in the family slept soundly, she sat up and thought and planned. What would she do without Bob? What would her father do? What would her mother, Billy, Ted, and Carrie do? Then her thoughts came back to Bob. Once in a while somebody looking like Ralph flitted through her thoughts.

Alma was now eighteen.

CHAPTER II.

HE CHOOSES TO GO.

IN the last chapter it was said that Bob Walker could go to sea if he wished, and he both wished and chose to go, and his parents consented, though Mrs. Walker's ordinarily long face grew longer yet when she thought about the voyage. She thought, too, that "Sardinius" was "unusually absentminded." All at home seemed to come under a cloud. Alma had spells of somber stopping at a chamber-window from which could be seen the masts of the *Andromeda*, while beyond these, a strip of water flashed in the sun like a bar of silver. The children, Ted, Billy, and Carrie, aged nine, seven, and five, had many questions to ask, and Carrie, Alma's bed-mate, woke up one night out of a dream and cried as she sobbed out the fear that her "Bobbie was a-eaten up by wales."

"O, no," whispered Alma, at the same time shivering at the last thought. "Bobbie is the one to eat up the whales."

But this assurance, which made Bob out to be a strange creature, a whale-devourer, did not prove to be as much of a pacificator as Alma intended. She was obliged to soothe Carrie to rest in some other way, and she was quieted at last and went to sleep.

The days slipped rapidly by, and brought Bob, one noon, to the dinner-table, saying, "O, folks, Cap'n Granby wants to know if you wouldn't like to come down and see the *Andromeda*."

"O—h—h, yes!" shouted the children, and their seniors were just as anxious to go.

Bob offered his services as guide, and as the family neared the wharf where the *Andromeda* was moored he called attention to the vessel's figure-head.

"There; that I suppose is *Andromeda*," he exclaimed.

"A dromedary?" asked Ted, who had seen a menagerie the summer before.

"No, no, Theodore," remarked his father, recalling his stock of learning amassed at "the academy," and proceeding to spread out those stores, "An-drom-e-da—was a—sea-monster—"

He hesitated and looked at Alma. Thoughtful daughter! She had not forgotten what she

had learned in the classical course at the high-school, graduating at the head of her class, and she knew what a pitfall of a blunder he was tumbling into, but she did not remind him of it. She only said, "Now, children, we wont bother father to tell us that old story. Let us talk about the ship. That is our first business. Come! We will leave Andromeda, and father will tell us by and by."

Sardinius Walker was very sensitive on the subject of his classical knowledge. He gave Alma a look of sincere gratitude, for he knew by her manner that he had been saved from some kind of peril. She had given him time to hunt up the facts about Andromeda.

"Now, children," continued Alma, "take a good long look at the ship. Bob says she is the best craft of the kind afloat."

"Yes," said Bob proudly; "they say she is somewhat old-fashioned, but Cap'n Granby says for her work she is one of the best vessels afloat."

Just before them, neat as one of the Oldburyport houses after a spring painting, rose the *Andromeda*, masts and spars, shrouds and stays, boats and anchors, all in good order, ready for

splendid service. The vessel was bark-rigged. She registered about five hundred tons, and could easily carry twenty-five hundred barrels of oil. Captain Granby, indeed, had said he, or the *Andromeda* rather, could carry three thousand barrels. She was built for two purposes. One was to go. Her bow was sharp. The swell of her sides, their graceful curve, pleased every sailor. She was built for something else. She was built to carry a big cargo. Her decks had a good width, and between deck and deck there was excellent stowage.

“Now you want to know what we carry with us,” said Captain Granby in response to a question from Mr. Walker. “Well, we must take boats, of course. Anyway, we must have four boats. Besides these we have three spare boats. Now I will show you something else.”

He pointed out boat material, such as light timber and boards. There were stores to be used in repairing the ship, like extra rigging or spars or sails. The *Andromeda* also took plenty of paint and tar. There were boat hatchets, lances, harpoons, whale-line, casks for the oil of the whales that might be taken, cutting-in spades, knives. The captain pointed out

the big iron pots for boiling the blubber, used in the process of "trying out."

"Now," he continued, "we have a big crew, and we want to feed them well, and you may want to see what we are going to eat. There! We have plenty of ship-biscuit, coffee, rice, beans, flour, pickles, tea; and we take pork and beef, molasses and Indian meal. We have got a quantity of canned goods, too. Don't mean to starve on board the *Andromeda*, I tell ye."

"Now, folks," said Bob proudly, "I want you to see where I tie up—or expect to."

In the forecastle he pointed out the tiers of bunks, one above another; and when Carrie said: "Where is yours, Bobbie?" he pointed out his resting-place for the night.

He did not see his little sister—for his back was quickly turned—as she stepped to the berth and hid something under his mattress. This had the approval of Alma's bright eyes, closely watching for an opportunity when Carrie might carry out this pre-arranged plan in which the two sisters had been interested.

"It's there where he sleeps," whispered Carrie; "there in that long hole, and I hid it."

Delight shone in her face, which was patterned after Alma's.

Captain Granby invited his visitors into his cabin, which was plainly furnished. In the center was a table, whose surface was divided by strips of wood running lengthwise.

"That's a funny way to fix a table—to have those pieces of wood going so," said Billy to Bob.

"Well, Billy, between those long strips they set the dishes, and then, when the ship goes so—up and down, up and down—the dishes can't so well slide off. And you see those frames overhead?"

Billy looked, and saw rows of tumblers that had been set in holes cut in shelves hanging from the ceiling above the table.

"There, Billy," said Bob, seizing his young brother, and almost tipping him upside down, "when the big waves make the *Andromeda* go this way—up and down, up and down—you see we have got things steadied somehow; so that they won't spill out."

Billy never forgot this illustration of a ship's motion in a rough sea, and on after-nights of storm he would shiver as he thought of his

Bobbie almost standing on his head in the inverted relations of things.

“How much of a crew will you take, captain?” inquired Mr. Walker.

“Well, we shall carry over thirty. You see, we must have enough sailors to man four boats, anyway. Each will need a crew of six, and that will make a couple of dozen men. Then we must have a cook and a steward, and I mean to get a cabin-boy. Must have a carpenter, you can see, where boats are likely to be injured by the whales, and we must have a cooper to look after our barrels. Then I want several spare men on hand to fill gaps. Folks die at sea as well as on land, and we must think of these things.”

“Yes,” said Bob’s father somberly.

Nobody seemed to care to continue that part of the subject, and here, as a diversion, Bob asked his wondering brothers if they did not want to see him “go up the rigging.”

“O yes!” they cried, four big eyes assenting also.

They all looked up from the deck while Bob proudly leaped into the shrouds, and taking on the swing of an old sailor, began to climb up.

Ah, he missed his footing, and awkwardly wriggled on the shrouds.

“Ship ahoy!” sang out Horace Haviland, who was up on the maintop looking down. “Take a reef in those legs!”

Several old whalemens looked up from the deck and grinned, while a shudder went through the older members of the Walker group, Carrie and Billy giving each a faint scream. Bob started up again, and went on without difficulty. He wanted to reach the maintop, where Horace was. There are two ways of approach. One is by the shrouds, going outside, or “over the top,” as sailors say, and the other is easy and safe for landsmen, and, doubtless out of regard for them, is named “the lubber’s hole,” taking one up through a hole near the mast, and then out upon the maintop.

“I won’t go by that lubber’s hole,” said Bob contemptuously, struggling up over the top, ludicrously squirming, losing his foothold, then regaining it, laying his hand in the wrong place, struggling harder, Horace Haviland at last rushing forward, shouting :

“Here, young shipmate, give us a flipper! You twist wuss than a seal on a clay bank.”

As he spoke he laid hold of Bob, and, vigorously pulling him up, landed him on the main-top.

The Walker circle was relieved to see the young sailor in the stout grasp of Horace, and still more fully relieved when Bob was down on the deck again.

“I—I did it!” said Bob, trying to give his head a shake, as if in triumph.

“Guess—guess, Bob,” whispered his father to the aspiring navigator, “I wouldn’t try that much until I was a little more used to it.”

This encouraging remark belongs to the same class of directions as that to boys who are advised to keep out of water until they know how to swim.

When the Walkers were once more at home, Alma gratified her father’s vanity, and at the same time gave him opportunity for private preparation, by proposing to him that at supper-time he should tell them the story about Andromeda.

“I certainly will, my dear,” said the father complacently.

He busily consulted his old dust-covered classical dictionary, and at supper-time remarked :

“Now, children, I will tell you about Andromeda.”

All listened while he very learnedly talked about the ancient Andromeda.

“She was the daughter of Cassiopeia, who was the queen of the Ethiopians. Foolishly the mother said Andromeda was better-looking than the Nereids, a kind of beings, females, you know, who lived — or were supposed to live — in the water. Well, Neptune, the god of the sea, or somebody the Greeks supposed was ruler of the sea, did not like Cassiopeia’s talk. He sent a flood and a sea-monster that killed people right and left; beasts, too. Well, there was a good deal of excitement, and it was announced that there would be no let-up in this business until Andromeda’s father had first exposed her as a sacrifice to the monster’s appetite. Poor Andromeda! They took her one day down to the sea-shore and tied her to a rock. There they left her, poor Andromeda! waiting for the awful monster to come out of the sea. But who should happen along but Perseus, a brave fellow, who had already gained a victory elsewhere over an enemy called the Gorgon. Perseus was not afraid, not a bit. He just

went to work, killed the monster, and untied Andromeda."

"O wasn't that jolly!" said Ted.

"Andromeda's folks ought to have done one thing more," suggested Bob.

"What was that?" said the historian.

"Why, made him their son. That's what they generally do in such stories—give the daughter in marriage to the one that rescues her."

"O, well, my son, that is not every thing in this life."

Alma gave her brother a look which meant something, he well knew.

"Alma," he said, after supper, when they were alone, "what did you mean by looking at me?"

"Why, Bob, Perseus married Andromeda."

"He did? And father forgot it?"

"O well, you can't expect one to remember every thing."

"No, but I mean to think of it when I am out on the sea and the figure-head is dipping into the cold water. I'll say to myself, 'The real Andromeda had an easy time by and by, and got married.'"

That very night there was not a Walker but that dreamed of Andromeda. Alma saw the vessel far out at sea. As the bow dipped down into the frothing billows, they seemed to change to sea-monsters that sprang upon poor Andromeda and tried to pull her down into the ocean, and bury her forever in its cold depths. And at every such assault Bob would come forward, like Perseus of old, and, looking down on the exposed figure-head, would say some encouraging word to the defenseless Andromeda and drive away those reckless assailants. After this dream came a long, forgetful space of slumber. Then the dream returned, the sea-monsters rushing at Andromeda, Bob standing in the vessel's bows and driving them away. Suddenly he called—was it “Andromeda, Andromeda?”

Alma awoke.

“Alma!” cried a voice at the foot of the kitchen stairs.

“O, father, is that you?”

“Yes, dear. Time to be up.”

“I will come. Father!”

“What?”

“Didn't you call ‘Andromeda?’ Thought I heard somebody.”

“Why, no; I said ‘Alma! Alma!’ Guess my story was too much for you.”

Sardinius felt proud to think his classical knowledge had made such an impression on the family. He took it also as a deserved tribute to that famous Academy, the pride of his younger years, his honored “Alma Mater.”

CHAPTER III.

WANTED, MITTENS.

“THERE, Bob,” said Alma one day, turning away from the kitchen stove. She and Bob were alone just then, Mrs. Walker having retreated to her chamber, where, unseen, she wished to shed a few tears over Bob’s departure, while the father, with Ted, Billy, and Carrie, had gone down to the wharf to see the *Andromeda*.

“There, Bob!” exclaimed Alma again.

“Well, Alma, what is it?”

“I have forgotten one thing. I do believe I am growing old,” said Alma laughingly, in a liquid, rippling tone that old age cannot possibly reproduce.

“O, no,” said Bob encouragingly.

“Well, I will tell you what, Bob. I will make a bargain with you. I want to go out and buy something, and if you will watch the herrings in the oven I will do my errand. Now, don’t let them burn.”

“Alma, if I let them burn you may burn me.”

Alma laughed again. She pulled her brown hood over a lot of curls that had a very willful, independent way of growing, and never yet had been successfully imprisoned by any head-dress Alma might wear. She drew about her shoulders “mother’s red shawl,” worn by every body in the family save the men-folks. Then she hurried up the alley and came at last to the main street of the town and known as Central Street.

“O, dear!” said Alma, looking anxiously up and down the street, “what if ‘Charlie’ should be shut up! There he is. I am so forgetful!”

Was she forgetful? Alma had one of those roomy, hospitable natures, welcoming everybody’s care and trouble, and in an apartment built to hold fifty it is not easy to find place for eighty. She seemed at times to forget, but it was rather because this hour’s wants were so numerous that they crowded upon those of the previous hour. Ted would say, “Alma, I am hungry,” or Carrie would moan, “My dress is torn, Alma,” or Billy might whimper, “Alma, can’t I go out-doors?” On top of these

statements would come father's inquiry, "Alma, can we make the butter last over to-morrow?" and mother's wonder, "Alma, have you an idea where the camphor-bottle has gone?"

It is a wonder that Alma remembered as many things as she did, and a greater mystery that she did so much actual work day by day. What helped her (and what will help every body) was a disposition to accept all home-service as a pleasure. It was her life to do for others. That disposition saves one in work from any unpleasant friction which is likely to interfere with memory, and every thing else also. I am not describing a saint. Alma was just a very natural, impulsive, warm-hearted girl, whom every body liked. Her very looks suggested that rich, bountiful nature which her name implied. She was of medium height, and rather full and chubby in form. She had a round face, that good health and good spirits kept freshly tinted. She had dimpled cheeks and a mouth that parted evenly and showed pretty teeth. Her eyes were very dark, and had soft, lustrous depths, that made you think of the sea-water in the shadow of still nooks and corners of the shore-ledges. When Alma laughed and shook all her

wealth of curls, it was a comely sight to behold. Every year Mrs. Walker prophesied she would "surely die this year," and why she didn't I cannot conceive, unless it was Alma's resolute, cheerful resistance, who would say, "No, mother, I sha'n't let you!" That settled it, until the next spring set in with its east winds and bilious days. When Mr. Sardinius Walker had his seasons of discouragement, because he had seen a scowling creditor up in town, he knew where to hasten as soon as possible, and, finding Alma, he would throw himself into one of the three old rocking-chairs at home and exclaim, "There, I've seen Bailey about that wood we bought, and we might as well give up first as last."

"No, father," she would be likely to say, "I don't believe in giving up. You will have a job at book-keeping—or—or—"

Then she would mention nice little projects for raising money, and that appeal to Mr. Sardinius Walker's imagination was so much in harmony with his temperament that he would leave Alma's presence whistling away and retiring to meditate in hope awhile; but the meditation was likely to end in despondency. If it possibly ended in a trial on Central Street to

obtain a little work as penman, such efforts were not generally successful.

Bob was different from Alma, while resembling her. He had her eyes and complexion, but his face was long and thin. His hair was dark, and also straight, save at the forehead, where it lay on the clear white skin in a single curl. He was rather tall, and of a muscular build. He was not only impulsive, but often heedless. He was very venturesome. Alma would say, "There; I am willing to go away from home and see what is outside by day, but when night comes I want to be where I can see home."

Bob's dark eyes would kindle, and he would exclaim enthusiastically, "I want to see the world—the whole of it." Bob did not have such an abounding stock of good nature as Alma. The latter could "get mad," but she did not often indulge any such mood. People thought Bob to be rather quick-tempered, but he was very generous and social.

He was a welcome companion in any of the sports of the young people, and the older folks made ready room for his vivacity in their gatherings. Bob was not afraid of work, while his father shunned really laborious efforts. Bob,

too, had a laudable desire to succeed. He was ambitious. He determined he would not be like his father, "bothered by debts." And yet Bob was not careful in what he spent. If he came into bondage to any creditor at the stores, it did not greatly worry Bob. Now Alma hated debt and tried to keep out of it. She would go without an article rather than thereby run into debt. Bob would go destitute as long as he comfortably could, and then would say, "There! I have waited long enough. I am going to have that thing and pay—when I can. The sooner I pay the better, of course, but I must have it."

To Bob's life there was an aspect of unsteadiness. A popular fellow, gifted with certain noble qualities, there was a lack of self-control. Something needed to be introduced into his character—a rudder to hold the vessel to a steady course. Hasty impulses would give him trouble at times.

"O, it is Bob!" would be the comment, if not an explanation, volunteered by his friends when he gave way to some strange impulse.

"Going to sea will be a first-rate thing for Bob," people said. "It will sort of trim the ship. He is a generous soul."

They did not feel like criticising Bob unless they also commended him, for somehow they could not help liking him.

His unsteadiness seemed to be expressed in Bob's very gait. There was a swing to it, a careless swagger without its conceit, and, as he inclined this way or that, he might suddenly shoot into the street to see why the boys might be hanging round the cart of Billy Toby, the fish peddler, or he might shoot the other way and vault over a fence behind which he heard two dogs growling. He had very little fear about his nature, and that made him an attractive leader for venturesome boys about the town. He had no bad habits, though, to make him a dangerous leader. He did not swear, and he had not yet learned the so-called manly arts of chewing or smoking or drinking.

"Alma won't let me," he would sometimes say. "She is a fanatic about those things."

"Yes, Bob, I am a fanatic about those things," Alma once declared, bringing squarely down upon the floor her foot, "if to be opposed to them is fanaticism."

"I told you she wouldn't let me," said Bob to one who urged him to take a cigar. "No,

sir; I can't do any thing till Alma says I may."

Alma's opinion had great weight in the Walker house, at least, and Alma's activity almost seemed to be the one condition of the life of the household. Her agency was quite important in securing for Bob's comfort the article for whose sake she now visited Central Street the day before his departure. She went into a store, at whose door and in whose window were paraded all kinds of men's furnishing goods and clothing, and those for sailors in particular. The proprietor stood behind the counter, Mr. Charles Habermann, a German, whose accessibility and sociability gained for him in town circles of business the universal pet term, "Charlie." He was a one-armed emigrant, who gradually had got into trade, and with the sailors especially was a great favorite. He had neither wife nor child, nor kindred of any degree, and his store, a kind of curiosity shop, received very largely his affection, and occupied all his time. It was wife and family to him.

"O, Mr. Habermann, have you mittens?" inquired Alma, in her energetic way, hurrying into the store.

A short, thick-set man, heavy and dark-featured, with a very pleasant voice, in a slow, deliberate way he replied :

“O yes! Let—me—see. Joost—let—me—see.”

His goods were disposed not in layers or orderly rows, but miscellaneous heaps, and a bundle of mittens might make a nest on a shelf by the side of several packages of pins. There would have been an annoying mishap if a hand of flesh had been thrust inside a mitten and the pins had all gone to prieking. Perhaps that was the law of association in Charlie's mind—joining mittens and pins together, one suggesting the other in the above fashion—and so he was moved to tumble them together upon the same shelf.

“O dear!” thought Alma, who knew Charlie's peculiarities of business, “that ‘joost let me see’ means he has got to hunt in this haystack, and there are my herrings at home! They will—O dear, if Bob don't watch them!”

“Mittensh—mittensh,” Charlie was saying, moving slowly along before his crowded, confused shelves. “Where are those mit—tensh? Yas, I did put dem up—up—up—O, Alma, you

shtop one minute, and I will hab dem fery direct. Mit—tensh. What goesh wid mit—tensh? O, pinsh—I hab it! And where—where are the pinsh?”

He had gone the length of his shelves on one side of his store, and now looked inquiringly at the other side.

“O, Charlie!”

She stopped. She had forgotten herself. Never before had she called him by the name that his business acquaintances gave him.

“Excuse—me—Mr. Habermann,” stammered Alma.

Charlie’s dark eyes brightened into diamonds. What lonely man would not have been pleased with Alma’s friendly use of his first name?

“O, dat ish no matter! Call me Sharlie always. Yes, Alma, always.”

“O, dear!” thought Alma. “These mittens are making me a lot of trouble.”

They were destined to make Alma and Bob a lot of trouble that could not possibly have been anticipated, and it is not my purpose to make any anticipatory statement here, and thereby gratify any reader’s curiosity.

“And there are the herrings!” continued

Alma in her thoughts. "O hurry, Charlie—Mr. Habermann, and get my mittens!"

Snapping his fingers, winking his eyes, humming snatches of tunes, Charlie fluttered before his shelves like a distracted bee before a thorn hedge, in which was hid somewhere a single holly-hock. After more snapping and winking and humming, he found at last the pin-and-mitten heap.

"Dere," said Charlie, bringing down a big bundle, "are some ob de nishest mittens."

"They are very thick and warm. They will be nice in cold weather. How much are they?"

"Forty-one shentsh."

Alma shrank back in alarm. She had only forty. To get the forty she had raked and scraped every-where at home, and to get the last penny had sent Billy on a hot chase after the ragman to sell a discarded old dress found up in the attic. Charlie may have detected her alarm. He now said:

"Alma, I gib dose to you as a present from Sharlie."

Never did this humble dealer in clothing for the wardrobe of the hardy seamen coming to

Oldburyport make a more obsequious bow to any customer than to Alma.

“O—O—I shall ruin you! I will pay—will bring in the other—”

“Alma,” said Charlie, firmly and sympathetically, “when you hang out close in de yard, dese mittensh—”

“O, thank you; but summer is coming, and I sha’n’t need any in hanging out clothes. They are for Bob, who is going, you know, in a whaler.”

“O! For Bob?” asked Charlie, in the tones at first of one who was disappointed.

He recovered himself. He remembered that Bob was Alma’s brother.

“Den,” he said, with a pleased air again, “’low me, Alma, to gib dose mittensh to your brudder. Ven he climb de mast, ven he go for de vales, ven he come shib’rin’ to de ship from de ice and shnow, dey will be fery goot. Dey are for Alma’s brudder.”

It was so pleasant to think that these mittens were going, not to a “Bob” merely, but to Bob, the brother of Alma Walker. The blushing recipient of the gift knew not what to say, but confusedly stood on the outside of the counter,

while the grinning, happy Charlie bowed low on the inside.

“I—I—I—” exclaimed Alma, “I—had rather pay—”

“Shay no more to me, Alma—”

“Bob will be very much obliged, but—I—I—hope—t-to—p-pay,” stammered Alma.

“Shay notin’ ’bout dat, not one leetle ting! I inshist, I inshist! Ven Bob ’mong de vales, ven de vinds blow and de seas roll, Bob can tink of Sharlie. Dey vill do him goot.”

Smiling cordially, rubbing his hands, Charlie followed Alma to the door. There he lingered, looking up at the church-vane to see what weather the pointers might indicate, then glancing at the country wagons slowly rattling down the street. He turned back into the store, saying to himself, “Dose mittensh vill do Bob a heap of goot.”

He little anticipated the trouble they would make the sailor-boy. Alma went down street saying, “O, dear, those herrings in the stove! I hope Bob has closely watched them, and they are not burned.”

Bob remained in the house watching about one minute by the faded old time-piece ticking

feebly on the mantle-piece. Suddenly he heard a sharp, piercing cry in the alley, "Had-dick! Her-rin'! Had-dick! Her-rin'!" He did not stop to contemplate the state of his pocket-book, whether it would allow him to buy even one more herring. He only thought how desirable it would be to have half a dozen. Obeying the impulse of this first thought, and not waiting that a second might reach and detain him, he dashed out of doors. He saw the fish-peddler's cart in the alley, and under it crouched a surly bull-dog, with a heavy jaw, fat, full chops, and scowling, dark eyes. But he saw something else, and that interested him more than the fish-cart or the bull-dog. Two young men were on the sidewalk carrying between them a chest such as seamen use.

"A sailor's chest!" thought Bob, and then he began excitedly to enumerate its features. "Painted blue, rope handles—"

He stopped. One of these young men was white, the other colored; a handsome mulatto. The first was the older, and as he turned his head Bob did not know whether it was the young man that resembled the bull-dog under the cart, or the bull-dog that resembled the

young man. One or both of these sailors had been drinking, for the trunk would sway violently as one or the other pulled it.

"Come!" shouted Bull-dog. "Who—who—who yer shovin'? Look out!"

"He is drunk!" thought Bob.

"I am not shoving any body," retorted the mulatto. "You are the one that shove!"

"*He* is not drunk!" declared Bob.

Bull-dog now dropped his end of the trunk, and stepped threateningly toward the mulatto, who was no match for this opponent, even though the latter was not of heavy build.

"You—say—you—did not—shove?" asked Bull-dog.

"Yes, I do."

Bob did not give one more thought to the fish-cart in the street, or those fish in the oven. He dearly loved an adventure, and still more intensely he loved fair play. He had seen the drunken Bull-dog stagger, and that brought him violently against the trunk.

"Don't yer—say—yer didn't shove—that trunk—agin me!" wrathfully growled Bull-dog, holding a threatening fist in dangerous proximity to the mulatto's nose.

"Yes, I will!" said the latter.

"And he had a right to say it!" asserted Bob, quickly stepping forward. "I saw it all. He did not shove you!"

"Who—who are you?" inquired Bull-dog, now in a furious passion.

"No matter about that," said Bob. "I want to see fair play."

Bull-dog now was so excited that he could not speak. He had sense enough aboard to see that he was no match for the two young men, and he shrank back.

"O come, Steve!" said the mulatto. "There's the cap'n!"

A man with a weather-beaten face like that of a seaman was coming down the alley. Bull-dog eyed him a moment; then, seizing a rope handle, he muttered, "Come along."

The mulatto obeyed, and the two went down the alley.

"Wonder if they are going to the *Andromeda*?" conjectured Bob, as they turned toward the wharves.

No, they passed the old whaler. Bob followed them, determined to see that no injustice was done the mulatto, for the young men's

captain seemed to have disappeared, and with him went any promise of protection for the mulatto from that quarter. Bull-dog, though, staggered ahead—when he did not stagger side-wise—and did not stop until they reached a vessel lying at the end of the last wharf stretching out into the river.

“O, that is a schooner from one of the British provinces going to New York,” soliloquized Bob. “I heard somebody say she meant to drop down with the tide to-night and get out to sea, if possible, before dark. Here comes the cap’n.”

This officer now made his appearance again.

Bull-dog and the mulatto were about going aboard when Bull-dog turned and confronted Bob, who had closely followed. He had been led on by the fascination of any chance for adventure, and was resolute to see fair play given to the mulatto.

“Lemme look at ye!” said Bull-dog to Bob. “I want to take a good long look at ye. I want to remember ye.”

Bull-dog brought his dark, revengeful eyes close to Bob’s face.

“Take a good, long look!” cried Bob. “I

am a very handsome man, and you wont see so fine a picture again very soon.”

“If the cap’n wasn’t comin’, I’d spile that pictur pretty quick for interferin’ with me, but we shall see each other agin.”

“I hope so,” said Bob cheerfully and promptly. “You need looking after.”

“Dark eyes, long face, lot of hair—” murmured Bull-dog.

“Now, if I had known you were going to ask for a look at my face I would have brought my photograph, and you could have kept it under your pillow and looked at it often as you felt like it.”

The mulatto laughed and Bull-dog frowned.

“Cap’n is close by,” whispered the mulatto. “Shove aboard quick, Steve.”

Muttering gloomily, Bull-dog crawled over the vessel’s rail, almost tumbling upon the deck; but he recovered himself, and was ready to say, obsequiously, “On hand, cap’n,” when the vessel’s master appeared. Bob now left. He went off whistling, but opposite the *Andromeda* he abruptly stopped. There he stood one moment, the mouth still gaping after that unfinished whistle. Then he started on a run, uttering

this one word, "Herring!" Into the house he hurried, but an odor of smoke told the story. Before the oven-door Alma was kneeling, and she exclaimed:

"O, Bob, our supper is gone!"

Bob said "Too bad!" and looked bad; but that did not bring the supper back.

They sat down, as often before, to a table on which were bread and butter and hot weak tea—not the most satisfactory kind of a supper.

"Well, Bob," said Alma, comfortingly and animatedly, "you shall have a good cup of coffee in the morning before—"

She looked at her mother, and saw her head drooping, and, checking herself, said:

"There, Bob, I forgot to tell you I have got a surprise for you, and I will give it to you this moment."

She rose, left the table, and, returning, gave her brother the mitten package. Bob began to read its superscription:

"'For Brother Bob. Not to be opened until the first streak of cold weather sets in. From a friend.' Ah, Alma, thank you—"

"No, I didn't give it. That is from Charlie Habermann."

“O, from Charlie! All right! He is a very good fellow. I will see that it is packed in my chest and opened at the proper time. Put them on the shelf now.”

The next day the farewell words were spoken by Bob, and the *Andromeda* faced and sought that ocean fabled to have sent a devouring monster to her namesake of old.

CHAPTER IV.

GETTING HIS SEA-LEGS ON.

“GUESS I have got my sea-legs on,” declared Bob that very afternoon of the departure, strutting about the forecastle or striding the deck, exceedingly pleased that he was not sea-sick. “I pity Ralph.”

Ralph Winthrop was half a dozen months older than Bob. He was of graceful but slender build. As his health was not very firm, medical advice said—and that meant wise old Dr. Bates—“Give up your books awhile, Ralph, and go off on a sea-voyage for a year or two.”

This was Squire Winthrop’s reply to this medical advice when Ralph reported it to him: “I will think it over, Ralph.”

Ralph had been Bob’s school-mate, and always liked him, though the two were very different. Morally, Ralph was a crusader; brave, in a serious emergency, to martyrdom. Physically, he was timid. Hero and scarecrow tenanted the same body. He was not responsible, though,

for this physical shrinking. It came with his body, and Ralph's soul disowned it. In his personal appearance he would have attracted attention anywhere at once. He had a refined face, fair complexion, and eyes of deep blue that kindled with a strangely magnetic light when he addressed any one. His expression was one of peculiar interest—pure, unselfish, trustworthy. He had found in Bob a champion when boys at school took advantage of Ralph's weak body and sometimes tormented him. Ralph repaid Bob's alliance with his gratitude in public, and in private with many tokens of his appreciation.

We always take a special interest in any thing weak that we may have protected. This, in part, explained Bob's interest in Ralph. Bob's *protégé* was also, as already affirmed, a noble-hearted, refined boy, a character that will interest any body susceptible to appreciation of true worth of character. Ralph never disappointed Bob in any testing of character, though he might disappoint him in an hour when physical bravery and daring might be demanded.

“Bob, I—I—am ashamed to feel so, but somehow my old body is a real coward,” Ralph

once said on an occasion of faltering before a danger.

“Ralph,” said Bob, who did not thoroughly understand his comrade’s physical peculiarities, “all that is needed to make you brave as one of old Bonaparte’s soldiers is to have you go to sea. That will make a man of you.”

This remark was made by Bob one day when the two boys were out on the river running by Oldburyport. They were rowing a dory belonging to Squire Winthrop. Bob’s companion smiled, taking good-naturedly Bob’s rather patronizing remark.

“I can’t explain it, Bob, but I am afraid in a thunder-storm, and shiver before lots of things. Still, if I thought I was called on to do any thing that I knew to be wrong—may sound like boasting—I hope I should submit to considerable rather than do it.”

“I think you would stand your ground there, Ralph,” said Bob, “though you knew you might have to go to the stake for it.”

Ralph modestly said he did not “know about just that;” whereupon Bob said emphatically he did know about that.

The boys were drawing the line fairly in this

case between Ralph as timorous and Ralph as courageous. He had a physical shrinking from pain or the risk of it, and yet he had that scrupulous regard for the right out of which you get martyrs willing to stand and smolder at the stake. It only needed an appeal to Ralph's moral nature to give him a victory of the spirit over all timidity and all cowardice of the flesh.

After this talk between the two boys, Ralph one day asked Squire Winthrop if he might go off in the *Andromeda*.

"Ralph," said Squire Winthrop (he had received this title from the people on account of some office held years ago), "I think that it would be an excellent thing. The doctor said only the other day a sea-voyage would be good for your health."

Arrangements for Ralph's departure as a member of the *Andromeda's* company were quickly made.

The Winthrops in Oldburyport had the reputation of being "rich as mud," and previous to Ralph's departure Squire Winthrop made an interesting statement about property he designed for Ralph. The latter called him "grandpa," though this was not the squire's

relation to him. Ralph was a distant relative taken into the squire's home. The squire now said :

“Ralph, you have lived with me ever since, ten years ago, your parents committed you to my care, and as both are now dead I feel like a parent to you, and have tried to look faithfully after you.”

“You have done all that, grandpa,” said Ralph gratefully.

“I hope so. Now that you are going away, I feel peculiarly my loneliness.”

Squire Winthrop was a widower. His home was managed by Mrs. Walker, a cousin to Sardinus, and known by Bob and Alma as “Aunt Mary.” Since Ralph was the only member of the squire's family at all related to him, the squire felt his loneliness. He now continued :

“I know that I am an old man. While I hope that I may be alive when you return, yet at my time of life there is great uncertainty. I shall make my will, Ralph, so as to protect your interests, and I want you to know now that it is my purpose to give you what we call ‘the brick block.’ My will will be deposited with Lawyer Hatch, who will be my executor.

I want you to know these things before you go away, Ralph, though I hope when you come back you will find me—”

Squire Winthrop ceased. Tears glistened in the old man's eyes. Ralph was very dear to him.

“Grandpa, you are very kind to speak of this. I hope nothing will happen, and that we shall go on with our home. You have always done every thing for me—”

“O, don't say any thing about that. It is the future I want to care for. My thoughts, my blessing, my prayers will go with you, Ralph.”

It seemed as if these gave a strong push to the *Andromeda*, now speeding over the sea.

Ralph and Bob, that afternoon of the departure, under the swollen sails had been talking about home, their friends, the boys at school or in the stores, that they had known.

“Well,” said Bob, who felt that he had his “sea-legs on,” and was striding about in a dignified, ambitious way—“well, Ralph, we must do our best. Don't want people to say, you know, that we didn't come up to the scratch.”

“It looks, Bob, as if we ought to do that, though I begin—”

“What is it?” asked Bob, eying sharply Ralph’s face, which, he thought, looked rather pale. “Seasick, boy? Don’t say so! Get into your berth! I have just made up my mind that I won’t be seasick.”

“O, I am going to grin and bear it, whatever comes along.”

“What if Roaring Ben should come along? Grin and bear that?”

Roaring Ben was the second mate. Bowles was his surname, but no one ever said “Ben Bowles;” it was “Roaring Ben.” His voice was so prominent that the crew could not well think of any thing else than a wind in identifying and naming him.

“It’s either a nor’-wester or ‘Roarin’ Ben,’” an old veteran of the fore-castle said once when the sailors were discussing the meaning of a big noise.

“O, well, ‘Roaring Ben’ would be harmless if he didn’t have any work for us, Bob.”

“Of course. How do you feel now? Any more sick? Feel pale, boy?”

“Do I look so?”

“I don’t know but that you do look a little suspicious. However, ‘grin and bear it’ is the

advice of an experienced navigator on board this ship! Do as he says, unless you will let me carry you to your berth."

"Go away! Roaring Ben will be along. Say! You don't suppose he would send us up into the rigging the first day? Awful, if he should! How could I get up there!"

"Grin and bear it, young man; grin and bear it. I have been practicing on climbing. Guess I could make out."

He had been practicing. There was no high point in the vicinity of Bob's home which he had not tried to reach. He had climbed over the shed-roof and that of the next shed on a neighbor's lot. One day his mother had gone up garret to overhaul some old clothing. She climbed the stairway leading to the scuttle, and she raised it to admit more light.

"Did I ever!" she exclaimed, dropping the scuttle suddenly. "If there isn't Bob."

Yes, the first object seen was Bob's face! He had climbed the house-roof, and, crawling along the ridge-pole, had reached the scuttle when his mother chanced to open it.

"Here I am!" he shouted, raising the scuttle.

"There, Bob," said his mother, "I expect next

to see you on the church-vane, sitting across that."

"No, mother, you will see me going to the mast-head with ease, just because I have been practicing for it. No other way, you know."

Having practiced, he supposed that on board the *Andromeda* there would not be the least difficulty in going up the shrouds and reaching any point of the rigging.

"Wish I wasn't so timid!" exclaimed Ralph.

"Follow me!" said Bob proudly. "If you feel seasick, get on my back when up aloft. O, we sha'n't have to go aloft!"

On board ship, though, no one can with confidence anticipate an easy time. The wind freshened, and, as it looked very squally toward night, Roaring Ben, whose watch it was, thought it advisable to shorten sail. His voice bellowed forth its commands, and then whom did he see shrinking into one corner, hoping that he would not send them aloft, though outwardly trying to look brave?

"Ah, boys, up with you! Just bear a hand there! Up with you!" shouted the mate.

"Where, sir?" Ralph meekly ventured to inquire.

“Main top-sail!” roared Ben. “Where’s your ears? Lay aloft!”

“Aye, aye, sir!” replied Bob, promptly springing into the rigging.

“O, dear,” groaned Ralph, awkwardly following. “Where’s the main top-sail?”

He had been learning the parts of a ship, but his memory suddenly seemed to have deserted him. However, he followed Bob.

“Say!” bawled the mate, who at first had not closely watched the execution of his order to the boys, so multiplied were his duties. “That isn’t the mainmast!”

O, what sheepish boys crawled down the rigging! Bob had as usual been more anxious to go quick than to go right, and, obeying his first impulse, had climbed the shrouds nearest him. Consequently, he had started up the rigging of the foremast. Ralph was laughing. Bob, though, looked mad enough to eat Roaring Ben. After all his practice, to think he should go up the wrong mast! However, he rectified his error, went up the right shrouds, reached the right yard, and then, clinging for “dear life,” as Ralph said, the two boys tried to shorten sail. They had an abundance of company, so that

their duty was not a solitary one, but what an experience!

There was the sea roughening every-where around the *Andromeda*, while the numberless foaming crests of the waves were like white, angry faces lifted out of the sea. In the midst of this uneasiness, below his feet, was a vessel's deck that Ralph once ventured to look down upon, and how he did wish himself safely established there! He did not look a second time, for his head was beginning to swim. Up to the mast-head, up to the sky—covered with turbulent clouds—he turned his eyes, and his self-possession returned. He saw several sailors on his yard, and Bob was next. They all were gripping the fluttering sail, energetically trying to secure it. But was Bob slipping? Ralph never could exactly tell, and Bob never would allow that he was slipping, but while Ralph clung with one arm he threw another about Bob, and wished they both were five hundred miles inland.

“I feel miserably,” said Ralph.

“Guess, boys, we can do without you,” shouted a kindly voice, “and you have made a good beginning. Let me have your place.”

It was Horace Haviland. Ralph was entirely willing to resign his position to Horace, and he crawled back out of the way, followed by Bob.

“What’s—what’s—the matter, Bob?” said Ralph, looking into a very pale face. “You—you sick? This—old—thing—tosses so—I can’t—”

“What’s—what’s—the matter with you?” said Bob, who was just above Ralph on the shrouds, and now looked down into a ghastly face. “You got—a—touch—of—sickness? Hadn’t we better go—down—”

“Down—to—the deck? O—hold on—just till Horace—and the others get through—and—we—will go—with them,” pleaded Ralph. “If we don’t, that hurricane of a Ben will send us—up again—”

“Well,” said Bob, mournfully; adding, “I feel—”

“The way—I feel, probably. Don’t say any thing. Grin—”

“And bear it,” was the heroic finish that Bob gave to the words of Ralph.

Two green boys up in the rigging of a ship, tossing on a sea where not an inch of land was in sight, under a sky that the clouds cov-

ered and the night soon would darken—two boys beginning to feel that there was a sea stirring inside of them—were they to be envied?

“Ralph,” sang out Bob, “I—I’ve got to go down—”

“Roaring Ben will send us up—”

“Down with you!” shouted Horace Haviland; “that sail is reefed. Down, boys.”

It seemed to the boys as if Horace’s rough voice made the sweetest possible music in all the world, and down they crawled, their heads drooping, just clinging with their hands, and putting their feet—somewhere—and feeling so wretchedly that the grimmest old enemy would have been moved to quick compassion. They staggered into the forecabin, and turned at once into their bunks, to lie there in misery, and longingly think of home.

CHAPTER V.

AT THE WALKER HOME.

DID two seasick sailor boys wish themselves at home? How gladly those at home would have welcomed them if returning that day!

“Didn’t think we should miss Ralph quite so badly,” said Squire Winthrop to his housekeeper, trying to smile as he spoke.

“House seems like a tomb,” replied Aunt Mary; a woman of nerve and energy, tall, dark, wearing spectacles.

“O, dear!” groaned Mrs. Walker, striving to be brave, but at last yielding to her mood, and bandaging her face with a big white handkerchief, “I knew my toothache would come on if Bob left.”

“It looks terribly homesick down in the dock where the *Andromeda* was,” Father Walker reported to Alma. “If I had known how it would be with Bob gone I never would have consented to his going off. How do you feel about it, Alma?”

It was Alma's nature to feel, and then in a courageous way to bravely accept the situation and endeavor to make the best of it. She relied very much on Bob. When her mother's nerves were troublesome Bob could quiet them. That the impulsive, restless Bob should ever have been like a narcotic may have seemed strange, but then "nerves" are strange things any way. When Mrs. Walker said that hers were "a-jump-in'," Bob could somehow subdue them. Then he was helpful to Alma. When the father forgot, as he often did, to bring home flour, meal, or meat, Bob was the one to spring up and rush to the stores on Central Street. Besides, he would bring Alma any little earnings he might receive, and only Alma knew how helpful they were. Bob also was such a social body—so noisy, making his whistle echo all over the house, and his shout echo all about it, that the place did seem very empty now. When all had gone to bed that night, Alma lingered before the kitchen fire and wondered where Bob was. She heard the wind sigh down the lane, and she fancied how it might be out at sea. Then she thought of the burdens sure to come upon her shoulders now that Bob was gone. O how they

multiplied, and not only seemed to drop upon her, but, as if animated and alive, seemed to rush at her! "I am the flour-barrel; fill me!" said one. "I am the stove-hod; give me some coal!" said another. "I am the milk bill; pay me!" said a third. "We are the shoes Billy has been wearing out at the toes; mend us!" cried a fourth party. "And you the rent bill?" thought Alma as she saw another intruder fluttering before her. "O, dear, no, I wont sigh. To-morrow is Sunday, and I am going to have rest." "But Monday—what then?" all the bills seemed to shout. "Monday is coming."

"Well, I can't see as far ahead as Monday," replied Alma, who believed in taking what somebody has called short looks.

Blessed is it to take a look ahead that carries us into the midst of Sunday, that truce with care, that resting-place in the up-hill climb, that fuller chance for a talk with God and a leaning upon his strength.

That Sunday was such a house of comfort for Alma! To the dear old church, whose walls were so overgrown with the associations of worship, she took a request that the pastor might remember those who had gone to sea.

“O yes,” said fatherly old Mr. Tappan, “I was going to remember those who had gone in the *Andromeda*.”

It was raining when Alma went home from the evening service, the night was dark, and up the river came the cry of the sea. After the prayer for those on board the *Andromeda*, the vessel, to Alma’s sight, sailed not in darkness and wind and rain, but across a great space of peaceful sea, and amid rich, golden sunshine. The next morning, though, was—Monday, and there was the—“rent bill.”

“Father, I don’t suppose you know of any money anywhere for the rent?” asked Alma.

“Rent?” said Father Walker, who had just returned from an unsuccessful trip to Central Street after a job.

He spoke with a bewildered air. All color seemed to leave his face as he said :

“Rent? There! What shall we do? You see I didn’t get any thing this morning, and—”

Alma looked down and spoke slowly :

“I think I must do what I don’t want to do, go to see our landlord and ask him to give us a little more time.”

“Alma, child, if—if—you will, I’ll bless you,

and I know he won't refuse you," enthusiastically cried Father Walker.

He then sat down to his breakfast contentedly, and thought no more about rent.

"Alma will fix that," he had affirmed with assurance.

After breakfast Alma said :

"It is a bad matter, and the sooner it is over the better it will be, and I will go at once."

She hurried up-stairs to get the hat that, through re-fitting and re-trimming and great care, had been her "best" for four or five seasons. She halted in her room a few minutes. It was a rest to her to fall on her knees and tell God her perplexity, and ask for that guiding Hand which had so often led her through intricate ways.

"He has helped me so many times," she murmured, "that I don't believe this will be too hard for him."

Alma had a child's ready belief that somehow her Father in heaven, that great Friend, who is never wearied with the sound of oft-coming feet, could and would help her now. That prayer was like a breath of the pure outer air to one who has been shut up day after day to the at-

mosphere of the sick room. She left the house and passed up into Central Street.

“There is that old-fashioned house empty again,” thought Alma.

It was an antique wooden house, reputed to be one of the oldest in town, and around it hung a rich drapery of old-time stories. One corner had been modernized sufficiently to permit the building out of a bay-window on the first floor.

“There it is, looking at me again, and seeming to say, ‘What a good chance this is for you!’” thought Alma.

So often perplexed to know what she possibly might do to increase the income of the family, she sometimes had had a dream about this old house.

“If I could live in that house,” she now said to herself, repeating the substance of her dream, “I could keep a little store and display my goods in that bay-window. There, that will do to go with father’s efforts to get a job. We will let that go, and think about—rent. O, dear!”

Next to the old house was “the brick block.” This was Ralph’s expected inheritance. It was the largest structure of brick in the town, and that fact had given it the title it bore. Nobody

said "Winthrop's Block," but "the brick block."

"If father could only be employed by those in its offices, wouldn't it be nice!" thought Alma. "Then we could get along. No use to wish!"

She passed the brick block, and turned up a little court in whose rear rose a mansion, not stylish, but substantial and in good taste, fronted by a garden where the buds on the trees were rapidly swelling and getting up their pennants for spring's grand flag-raising in forest and field.

Alma hastened through the garden, ran up a flight of stone steps, and was received by a servant, who showed her into a library, and she there waited her landlord's appearance.

"Ah, Alma!" exclaimed Squire Winthrop as he entered. He was a tall, stately man, with a deep, impressive voice. He was not only crowned with his white hairs, but with the respect of all the Oldburyport people. "You are the very one I wanted to see, Alma."

"Yes, I suppose so," thought Alma. "He wants his rent."

She began to say, "I—I—" Somehow her breath seemed to have left her.

"Stop one minute! I will tell you what is on my mind," said Squire Winthrop. "You know the 'old house,' now empty, next to the brick block?"

Alma began to breathe more easily, and said, "O, yes, sir!"

"Well, I want," he said smilingly—"to come at once to my point—I want you to move into it!"

Did Alma hear aright? She almost lost her breath again in an amazement of joy.

"Not move into that old-fashioned house I have always liked?"

"Not only move in, but stay in."

"And keep store?"

"Store?" he asked looking puzzled.

"Why, I have thought how nice a store-window that bay-window would make—"

"Store?"

"Fancy goods, ribbons, pins, and needles—"

"And you keep it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Capital!"

"O, you are so good! But—"

Her countenance fell. She thought of that serious subject—"rent." He guessed her meaning.

"About the rent? Well, it occurred to me that for the rent your father might be willing to be janitor of the brick block. That means to open and close each day the door leading up to the offices and hall, sweep down the main stair-way, and look after any of the offices that needed him, open and close the hall when used. For the care of the hall, the heating and sweeping, he would have extra pay according to the nights it might be used. He could do it, I think, and attend also to any work he might get outside. You could—"

"You are so kind, I—"

She stopped. She suddenly thought about the rent of the present home that had not yet been paid, and, after all the kindness of the squire, it did seem too bad to tell the old gentleman that she had not brought him his due. There sat Alma, her head drooping like a flower suddenly wilted, her eyes cast down, her hands clasped in her lap, and a flush of shame and embarrassment overspreading her fair cheeks.

“Are—are not you well?” asked the squire solicitously.

“O, yes!” she said, not raising her head. “But—but, Squire Winthrop, it seems too bad, after your kindness, to say that the rent is not ready to-day, and to ask you for a few days more time?”

“O, that’s it! We can fix that,” said the squire promptly.

The squire’s pleasant, ready assurance had an effect like that of a bath of water on a drooping plant, and Alma raised her head.

“O, you are so good!”

“O, not at all! That is all right. Now, you go home and talk this over with your father and mother, and let me know—to-morrow, say? Your father will want to see me, too. The man who has been janitor at the brick block leaves in a week, so that his successor must be ready to go on duty at once, or very soon.”

How Alma went home, on feet or wings, along Central Street, or by a back way or not—I don’t think she knew. She went very quickly, and she went in a flutter. That was all she could report about the trip home. What she told those at home set them in a flutter as great

as her own. Father Walker called on the squire soon as he could get inside his best coat and pants. Mrs. Walker put on a faded sun-bonnet and hurried off to see "Aunt Mary." It was the first time her "nerves" had permitted her to make "a call" for a year. In her confusion she tied the strings of the old sun-bonnet so tightly that when she arrived at Aunt Mary's sitting-room, in the rear of Squire Winthrop's library, the tightly-drawn strings gave her flushed face a half-hung look. It was all settled within an hour, and the janitor-elect strutted down street as if he had unexpectedly come into possession of Squire Winthrop's magnificent brick block itself.

"We move next week," said Mrs. Walker to Alma, when she returned home; "and I am glad I feel so strong. I feel as if I could move the furniture myself."

"Good, mother, good! O, if Bob only knew it!" cried Alma enthusiastically.

Alma soon went up to Squire Winthrop's, for he had sent her word that he wanted to see her.

"I thought, Alma," remarked the squire, "that I would like to go over the house with you and tell you something about it."

“It is just what I wanted, Squire Winthrop; and could mother come too?”

“Why, yes, certainly; but I thought she was sick.”

“She was sick; but somehow this makes a new woman of her. It has,” said Alma, “awakened a strange interest, a new kind of energy in mother. She has been up here.”

“I did not know it. The town doctors ought to get hold of this fact, and if they did their patients might get hold of less medicine. There is in every physical body some power to repair waste, and one province of the doctor is to get that power to work, and, if weak, to strengthen it. Medicine must be discriminatingly given, and any superfluous administration is not only thrown away, but worse even. However, that is not seeing the old house, and soon as your mother comes—to-morrow, say, for that will rest her—we will look it over.”

Mrs. Walker, though, wanted to go that very day, and went. The old house was a so-called “double-house,” a long, wide hall dividing it. This hall extended from the street in front to a small, old-fashioned garden in the rear. At the right, as you entered from the street, was

the bay-window in the front room of a suite of two.

“Double parlors,” thought Alma; “but, if the squire still is willing, I will have a store in the front one.”

On the other side of the hall were two rooms that the family could occupy for living purposes.

“A sitting room in front and kitchen in the rear, mother?” asked Alma.

“Yes, that is it,” replied Mrs. Walker, accustomed to defer to her daughter’s opinion.

“Nice room for a kitchen especially,” said the squire, pointing to the back room. Outside of one of its windows stood a small apple-tree, in blossom now, its branches seeming to be crowded with pure, white faces coming out of some blessed land to give Alma and her mother a welcome. Up-stairs the room was divided into smaller apartments, connected by cozy passage ways. There was a hall on the second floor corresponding with that below, and between the two floors was a broad, gently sloping stairway. Its balustrade was of an old-fashioned type, but the structure was still strong. The wall paper—one noticed it as he descended the stairs—was

covered with palm-trees, so that on a hot day there was an agreeable illusion of coming down into a palm grove. On the second floor the scenery was different. There were big fleets of ships forever anchored on the paper of the upper hall. On the third floor was "a magnificent garret," as Alma termed it. From its front window you could look over the low roof of a block of stores opposite, and then out upon the river winding toward the sea. Alma and her mother had a morning view of the river and harbor. The sun was still trying to make the water believe it had been turned into glittering silver by the magic wand of its beams from the East.

"O, mother!" exclaimed Alma, "what a view! We can watch up here for ships when Bob is expected home."

"And it will be a comfort, any way, to look out and see which way he went," replied the mother, lingering thoughtfully at this window.

"Now," said the squire, "I want to tell you something about the picture."

"O yes!" replied Alma. "I almost forgot that. I have often heard about it. Somebody said it had gone."

“It is in the house, just the same, and I want to tell you about it. Shall we go down?”

The squire here led off, and the two ladies followed.

He halted before a portrait in the lower hall. It was the only piece of furniture in all the house below the attic. The squire almost bowed to it as he spoke, and it seemed, so tall and straight was he, as if one of the stately palms had stepped forward from the groves on the wall and made a slight obeisance to the portrait.

“Here it is,” he said, and then remained silent.

The picture was that of a man about fifty, stout and heavy, wearing a scarlet coat, though the tinting was much faded now. The man did not turn fully to the spectators, but it seemed as if, having started to move off, he partially turned to say something that he had forgotten, and so looked over his shoulder. It was a very scowling look he gave out of his dark eyes, deep-set under bushy brows, and a look as of indignation flushed his full round face with red.

“There,” said the squire, “the strange thing about that picture is that I don’t seem to know

who it is; whether an ancestor or just an intruder. My father before me did not know. It got into the possession of the family somehow. You know some people don't like to disturb pictures. You may have read, as I have, about pictures whose owner said they must not be removed. Well, I have that kind of feeling about that unknown man in scarlet. So I tell all who live as tenants not to touch the picture. Maybe superstition," continued the squire in low, half-whispered tones, as if he were talking to himself, "but I don't just like to disturb him. He has been there so long, you know, all these years of my knowledge, and he may have been one of the family—"

"You used to live here, sir, didn't you?" asked Mrs. Walker.

"When I was young; but I wanted to get back from the street—not wanting to go into business, like this enterprising young woman here—"

He hesitated and looked at Alma. Had he told a secret?

"Mother knows," said Alma quickly, "and she approves."

"Very well, then. So you see, I built the

house where I am living now. The puzzling thing about that picture—" he now returned to the portrait, which seemed to interest him exceedingly—"is, who can it be? Really, though, I don't know about him. Must have been, it seems to me, a kind of military man, for you see his coat is buttoned up like a soldier's—looks like it, at least; and when I was younger, and my eyes sharper and the picture not so dusty, I used to imagine a strap on his shoulder, but—I don't know. Looks pretty resolute; doesn't he?"

Alma thought he did, and as they turned to go away it seemed to her as if he looked very intently at her.

"You, young lady, do not belong to this Winthrop family, but I do. I own all the Winthrop house and Winthrop family," the portrait seemed to say. It startled the young woman.

Alma did not recover from this impression of a seeming charge against her, of trying to get him out of the Winthrop family, for a year at least. In the dark, when nothing could be seen, and in the bright sunlight, when much could be seen, by Alma hurrying past that portrait, again

and again did it seem as if the dark eyes looked sharply at her, and "Colonel Scarlet-coat," as the Walker children learned to call him, would say again, "You, young lady, do not belong to the Winthrop family, but I do."

We become used, though, to almost every thing, and gradually "Colonel Scarlet-coat" ceased to have any special interest for any body in the house. However, he did not cease to look day and night over his shoulder in the warmest weather and the coldest weather, on Sundays and on week days, as if he were on the watch for the man or woman who would certainly come some day and with no gentle hand take him down from his honorable place on the wall.

When the Walkers were established in their new quarters Alma said to herself, "Now for my store. But O, dear, where's the money coming from with which to buy pins and needles and cotton and ribbons and combs and hair-brushes—"

She stopped, and in despair looked at that vacant window. What could, could she do? She thought, she planned, she spoke to one merchant after another, but could get no help. She would not give it up. One day the senior

member of the firm of "Bangs Brothers" called to her when passing their splendid dry goods store.

"Excuse me, Miss Walker, but I understand you think of opening a little store," said Bangs.

"O—it wouldn't interfere with you!" replied Alma, thinking he referred to a possible clashing of the firms of "Bangs Brothers" and "A. Walker."

"O, I don't mean that!" he said, with a smile; "but I was thinking that if you wanted some goods on credit I could let you have some."

"Would you, though? That would be—"

Alma could not express her satisfaction readily, but it shone in her happy eyes. She tried to thank Mr. Bangs as well as she could, and hastened home to tell her father and mother. In due time the bay-window was stocked, and customers came in.

"Mother," said Alma one day, "I will tell you who I suspect is at the bottom of this."

"Of what?"

"Why, my having these goods to sell."

"Who?"

"I think Squire Winthrop said something to Bangs Brothers."

Alma's guess was correct. Squire Winthrop had said to the senior member of the firm, "Bangs, that young woman in Walker's family—"

"I know."

"Has an idea she would like to keep a little store in my old house?"

"Has she?"

"Yes, and if you will let her have some goods I will be responsible for their payment. Don't say any thing about me to her."

"But how will she know I am willing to do it—I mean, willing to start her?"

"O, you speak to her some day when she is going by. She will be passing along the street, and you speak."

Alma passed along and Bangs spoke.

A month after this, Squire Winthrop called upon his tenants in the old house. Stepping into the store, he exclaimed,

"What, *you* here, Mrs. Walker? *You* keep store? I thought Alma was the store-keeper."

"Well, squire, somehow I got interested, and

my health is so much better for it, and Alma says I have a real knack at it, and it gives her a chance to—to—”

“Do something else.”

“Yes, sir, something she has always thought she would like to do if she ever did have a chance to, you know—”

“Dress-making?” asked the squire.

“You knock on that door, sir, and see. We didn’t need more than the front room for the store, and so she has taken the back room.”

“I am really quite curious to see,” observed the squire. He stepped up to the door opening into the back parlor and gently knocked. Very quickly a hum of voices inside ceased, and the squire heard the step of some one approaching the door. When it was thrown back there appeared Alma. She greeted her landlord with a pleasant, “O, how do you do, Squire Winthrop?”

“Why, why!” he exclaimed, “What is this? Have you a seminary here?”

He saw eight children, each holding a small primer in the lap; and it was well the book thus fondled was not a big one, but slender and light,

for all the children were little folks, and unequal to heavy burdens.

"You see," said Alma, a quiet delight glowing in her eyes, "I have always had an idea I should like to teach, and mother, you see, takes to store-keeping, and so I secured some children in the neighborhood, and put one of ours with them, and that makes a class."

"I see, I see!" said the squire, nodding approvingly.

When he passed out into the broad hall and closed the door behind him, he lingered a moment to enjoy the echo of the children's voices giving "teacher" an answer in chorus.

"That girl is a treasure," thought the squire. "I am sure of that. I feel like adopting her and making her my daughter."

However, Squire Winthrop took no step toward the adoption of Alma as a daughter. The days went by quietly, but busily. Alma taught, and her mother sold pins and needles. No harm came to the Winthrop house or Winthrop family, though the mysterious portrait frowned continually, as much as to say, "*You*, young lady, will be the one through whom harm will come to me."

Harm? In all the world, who had a more tender, more amiable heart? She was loved on land and sea. One sailor-boy, confessedly, was her admirer, never weary of sounding her praises. That was her brother Bob, and his flight on canvas wings, far out to sea, we shall, in a little while, follow.

CHAPTER VI.

ASHORE STILL.

“COULD I see you a moment, Almay?”

It was a gray morning, and the clouds hung thick above Oldburyport, and there was no sunshine in the bay-window of the old house where the Walkers lived. The sunshine, though, seemed to have come, for Alma had entered the room, and, in her cheerful, energetic way, humming a tune, was bustling among her goods of cotton and linen, her threads and laces, her buttons and yarn. But who was it that wanted to see her? The new-comer was a spare, gray-haired woman with bent form and worn features, and in her eyes was a vacant, abstracted look, as if a part of her mind had wandered away and she missed it, and was perplexed to know where it had gone. This indeed was the fact. Something given to other people, our greatest blessing, reason, was wanting in its completeness to Mary Haviland, and she had a confused sense of her loss without the ability to definitely state it.

“I know I am not like other people,” Mary Haviland would sometimes say. Severe sickness when a child had forever stunted her growth, and, though she became a woman, the mind and powers of a child were all that arrived at the years of womanhood. Her brother was Horace Haviland, of the crew of the *Andromeda*. She knew where he was weak, in his appetite for drink, and earnestly did she pray that Horace might become a new man. She was extremely susceptible to the thought of a God, of heaven, of the spiritual and eternal life. Her prayers were marvels of directness and trust. Alma once heard Mary Haviland pray.

“Mary took me deep into the presence of God, somehow,” Alma told her mother. “She had a real home-like way of talking, not so much to him, but with him. She never seems to have a doubt but that she will always get just what she wants.”

Mary had strong faith in her brother Horace’s victory sometime over drink.

“I just love to hear Mary tell about Horace—what he will become,” Alma once said to Aunt Mary. “Mary at one time thinks he will be a great sea-captain, and then another time it is a

great soldier, or a great preacher, but it is always something grand and marvelous. She thinks he is wonderful.”

And yet, with all her hopes and her expectations, there went the gravest fears on account of her brother's appetite for liquor. Like a pendulum, she went from joy to anxiety. She was now uneasy about Horace. When she called to see Alma, this gray, clouded morning, she showed her distress in her face.

“Could I see you a moment, Almay?” she asked again.

“O yes, Mary, what is it? Come into the school-room. We shall be alone there, you know.”

“You see, Almay, I am worried about Horace.”

“Well, there is this to be thought of, Mary: he knows his danger, and will be likely to be careful, I should say.”

“Yes, yes.”

That did not satisfy Mary, though she assented to Alma's words. It was not strange that Mary should be solicitous, for the *Andromeda* was halting in New York. The number of her crew was not full. A few repairs were to be

made. Mary knew that if Horace ventured ashore he would not be likely to stand the temptations sure to confront him. In the secluded room where they stood, there was silence for a while, Mary's faded blue eyes snapping and her wrinkled features working convulsively.

"O, I hope it will come out all right!" said Alma assuringly. "You stop and take some breakfast with me."

This seemed to exhaust Alma's list of resources. It did not satisfy Mary. She rose nervously, pulled over her shoulders a thin, gray shawl, for the morning was cool, and left the room. When she reached the hall, she turned and came back again.

"You see," she whispered, "I have an idea that what you say, Almay, is good—but—but—I seem to feel that all I can do is—is—just to tell the Lord."

"That is right, Mary," said Alma encouragingly. "It is all you can do, and the best thing you can do, to tell the Lord."

"Yes," said Mary, "I will do that. You know, Almay, I can always reach him."

In a poor but neat home on one of the narrow, crooked lanes straggling from the district

about Central Street down to the wharves, sat an old mother, who looked up from her knitting as Mary entered, and said :

“ Got back, Mary ? ”

“ Yes, mother,” replied the daughter, and went at once to a little side room, in which was a bed.

The door of this room she softly closed when she had entered. The open window she did not shut. Mary had an idea she could pray more freely when the window was open, and this fact she now noticed with pleasure.

“ I’ll just tell the Lord,” she murmured, and fell upon her knees.

As she prayed for the absent, tempted, weak brother, a peace came into her face. Somehow the wrinkles, as by the pressure of a gentle hand, seemed to go down and pass away. A robin alighted on the window-sill and sang. That did not disturb Mary.

“ It is the voice of the Lord,” she said in the depths of her soul.

As the robin sang on, Mary prayed on, and the change in her face was still more marked and strange. It was a child’s face bent over the bed, and seemingly asleep ; but Mary was not

asleep. Her soul was keenly awake, for she was with God, and his peace came down into her heart and stilled it, like the great tide in the river that twice a day came from the sea and set at liberty any stranded, vexed vessel, floating it off into depths of peace.

"I've got my answer," said Mary. "The Lord will take care of Horace."

Yes, the Lord will care, in his own way and at his own time; and a thought like this, but not so clear and definite, came to Mary. As she rose from her knees the now startled bird ceased his song, lifted his wings, and flew away. His music, though, stayed in the sister's heart that had been pleading for a brother.

"The Lord's voice, the Lord's voice," she often said during the day. "He will take care of Horace."

- And Horace, where was he? It was this same day, in New York, that Captain Granby had given leave to his crew to go ashore.

"Shall you go, Horace?" asked Bob.

"I—I—don't know. Yes, I think I will," replied Horace.

Bob and Ralph went off also. They strayed as far as Broadway, watching the crowd, looking

at the stores, until they were tired, and then returned to the ship.

“Seen any thing of Horace?” asked Captain Granby.

“No, sir; no, sir.”

“Nothing at all, boys?”

“Nothing at all, sir.”

“I wonder where he is?”

“Don’t you want us to look him up?” asked Bob.

“Where would you go to? Like trying to find an eel in a big mill-pond.”

“’Twon’t do any harm just to try,” suggested Ralph.

“Yes, that is so,” seconded Bob. “Trying wont cost you any thing?”

“You may go, boys. Don’t go far.”

“Aye, aye, sir,” sang out the boys together.

Off they started, Bob and Ralph, to hunt up Horace, encouraged by this parting remark from Captain Granby: “If Horace has taken any thing, the longer he is away from the ship the less sense he will bring back.”

The boys could not go far without meeting a row of rum saloons. They looked into saloon after saloon. They were all very much alike in

these particulars : they were dirty, ill-smelling, and occupied by rough, profane, lazy-looking men. Suddenly Bob shouted :

“There’s our man ! Now for him !”

Ralph held back a moment, asking himself,

“May—may there not be trouble ahead ?”

Bob asked no questions, saw trouble neither before him nor behind him, to the right or the left. He simply saw Horace, and rushed on. Ralph speedily caught up with him, and the two walked up to Horace, and each took him by an arm. He lowered a glass of whisky that had touched his lips, and confusedly, angrily, looked at his interrupters.

“All right, Horace !” said Bob soothingly.

“Go with us. That is a good fellow.”

“Yes, yes,” added Ralph ; “we are your friends.”

“Who are you ?” growled somebody on the other side of Ralph.

Bob and Ralph looked up. The former started. In the round, compact face, the heavy jaw, the fat, coarse, drooping cheeks, the angry, revengeful eyes, Bob saw—Bull-dog. That drunken sailor, whom Bob met before his departure from Oldburyport ; the same insolent

fellow who, with a bully's manners, had threatened his mulatto companion.

"Who are you?" he snarled out again. "O, you don't know enough to keep out of gentlemen's company, but must interrupt when you are not wanted. I know you," he added, addressing Bob. "I have seen you before."

"O!" said Bob with an embarrassed air. "No offense meant. Cap'n wants him. I—I wasn't looking for you. Didn't expect to see you."

"I s'pose not, young man. Blessings sometimes turn up when things least are expected. Now you let this man alone."

Bob was not afraid.

"I shall do my business with him in spite of you or any body else. The cap'n sent me."

Ralph had begun to shrink toward the door, but Bob's bold reply gave him courage, and he came back and took his stand beside Bob. He was no longer a coward. Was he going to leave Bob alone? Duty said "No." That was enough. He would have stood by the side of Bob come what might, and it did look as if something more than words would come from this episode. Horace was peaceable, and acted like one who

feels willing to leave himself in the hands of his friends, but is not able to decide who they are. He swayed toward Bob, and then he responded to the grasp of Bull-dog, and swayed toward him.

“Let this man alone,” commanded Bull-dog.

“I sha’n’t until he refuses to go with me,” replied Bob. “The cap’n sent me after you, Horace, and you know I am your friend.”

“That—that—sh—sho,” said Horace with thickened, bacchanalian speech.

“Row! row!” sang out some of the drinkers present, rushing up and forming a ring about the four sailors. The two bartenders set down the glasses and decanters they were handling, and looked on the scene curiously.

“You—let—go—of him!” shouted Bull-dog.

“Not until *he* tells me to. Horace, come along!” said Bob.

“Yes, yes!” chimed in Ralph.

Bull-dog and Bob both pulled stoutly. The circle of spectators pressed closer up to the contestants. Ralph eagerly maintained his place at the side of Bob. The bartenders rested their elbows on the counter and watched with quickened interest the strife.

“Pitch in!” shouted somebody.

“Pitch out!” shouted a second.

Matters looked very serious.

Horace at last shouted, “I am not going. Bob, shay—shay—I’ll be there!”

“No use in waiting! Pass right out, my little men!” cried Bull-dog.

“Yesh, tell the cap’n—shay to him,” said Horace, “I’ll be there.”

The by-standers and the bartenders, all curiously watching this scene, applauded the decision, and Bob sullenly retreated, Ralph saying, “You see nothing can be done, Bob.”

“I know it, Ralph, but I hate to give up.”

The boys withdrew to the street, and then went to the ship, followed after a while by Horace and—Bull-dog, could it be?

“You want to see the cap’n?” asked Bob, wondering what Bull-dog wanted.

“I’ll see him for myself when I want him,” replied Bull-dog, and retired to the fore-castle, taking Horace with him.

Bob was perplexed. Could Bull-dog possibly be one of the new seamen shipped at New York?

“I hope not,” thought Bob.

There was no room for this hope, Bob saw,

when he had asked information of the mate, Roaring Ben.

“He one of our men?” asked Bob.

“That feller with Horace?” replied Roaring Ben. “Yes, I am sorry to say, judging by his looks.”

Bob was still more sorry. To think he must go to sea with Bull-dog! There was no help for it. In this life we must take things as they are, and try to improve them, not wait till they are improved. I wish that on board the *Andromeda* the surroundings of Bob and Ralph could be reported as fully satisfactory; that every sailor could be counted as a beau-ideal of a man, and every officer a hero. Such a report would be a fiction.

I also wish that it might have been shown that Horace Haviland was superior to temptation. The man that staggered aboard the *Andromeda*--was he the great captain, the great soldier, the grand character poor Mary Haviland wished to see, hoped to see, believed one day she would see? Was it for such a result as this she had prayed? No. Why did God not throw about the tempted brother that strong arm which belongs to the Almighty? That is the

old question why God does not answer all our prayers at our dates for their answers, and in our way, also, of answering. We must leave time and mode to the great Hand that covers them, and cling to that Hand, believing that in God's time and in God's way the blessing will be sent. Mary Haviland hid in the depths of her soul this confidence, to which she could not give exact form in words, and it held her soul in peace, even as under the water the anchor, whose form we cannot outline, steadies the ship amid the swaying of the billows.

CHAPTER VII.

DOWN THE ATLANTIC.

THE *Andromeda* was now far out at sea.

“He says his name, Bob, is Stephen Wyckham,” remarked Ralph one day.

“Bull-dog’s name is that?” replied Bob.

“Yes; Stephen Wyckham. And you know he has behaved very decently. First two or three days, you know, he snubbed us and teased us, Bob.

“Know? I rather think I do—could not easily forget that.”

“Well, when he found out that Squire Winthrop was my relative, and had great pecuniary interest in the ship, I think it made a great difference in his treatment of me. When he found out that you were my friend, I fancied he took his teeth out of you and quit shaking you.”

“I saw the difference, but did not know what was the matter.”

“I had a talk with him—we were on deck

together—and he said, ‘They say you are a Winthrop.’”

“‘I always supposed so,’ I told him. Then I asked if he knew Squire Winthrop. ‘Somewhat,’ he said. ‘Not—much. Saw him once or twice. Perhaps you didn’t know I was a Winthrop?’ ‘You?’ said I, and I suppose I showed my surprise. ‘Stephen Wyckham is what folks call me, and I give that as my name. Really, it is Stephen W. Wyckham, and the middle W. is for Winthrop.’ ‘Indeed!’ said I. ‘Booby I was! You see, I could not keep my surprise to myself.’”

“I don’t wonder at that, to find out that the vicious Bull-dog was a Winthrop. I should have told him that he must have made a—a—slight mistake.”

“Well, I don’t know that it is so. He is a fellow that I don’t have confidence in. However, I can’t help his saying so.”

“It is Winthrop is that Winthrop does, you can tell him. You have got him there.”

“One funny thing I noticed as we were closing up that talk. In the old house at home, next to the brick block—the house where your folks are living, you know—is a picture in

the hall. Did you ever see that picture or hear of it?"

"Never did, Ralph. However, I hope to get home some day and see that picture a good many times."

"Nobody knows whose portrait it is. Squire Winthrop does not know whose it is; but it came somehow into the family possessions, and he has let it stay on the hall-wall. It may be a Winthrop. Now, that old ancestor—if he be one—in the portrait, has turned half-way round and is looking over his shoulder, as we say. I never liked the man's face, and as Steve Wyckham and I were talking, Cap'n Granby called to him. Steve started to go to him, but that he might catch my last word he turned and looked back at me over his shoulder, and there was—"

"That old ancestor in the picture?"

"The very same face, only Steve's was younger."

"Don't like to think Bull-dog is on guard there in that house where Alma and the folks are, Ralph."

"O, the picture won't hurt; if it would, I'd write to grandpa at once and have him burn the old thing up," said Ralph warmly.

This passionate interest in the Walkers' welfare was gratifying to Bob.

"Thank you, Ralph; but here we are off somewhere in the ocean—going nowhere, I should say, from the looks of things—and precious little chance have you for getting a letter to grandpa. Folks at home must put up with the picture—and it probably doesn't trouble them—and you and I must put up with Steve Wyckham, and make the best of him."

"That is good philosophy, Bob, and I am trying to make the best of all these fellows about me. Some of them are rough enough, but I don't doubt that they have their good qualities. I know what grandpa once said about a building he bought. He said it was rough enough on one side, 'but really,' he said, 'when I got round on the other side it looked very well, and, Ralph, that is the way it is with a good many people; and going through life you must try to get on their good-looking side.' Pretty good advice, wasn't it?"

"That's so, Ralph—and there is a chance to carry it out here. Well, I am going to do my best—and—and—that is all we are asked to do in this life. I am going to get along peaceably

with the folks about me, and make as good a whaleman as I can."

"That's the doctrine. That's the flag to run up. Now stick to it."

This was not Ralph's voice replying to Bob; but, looking up, the boys saw a shaggy face, and it accompanied Roaring Ben's big voice. If his name had been the Roaring Lion it would have been very appropriate. He was a blustering, self-satisfied officer, but a complete sailor, and always appreciative of one who had that ambition. He was rough enough to compete for the place of the north wind, but he was no friend to injustice. "Roaring Ben likes fair play," was a remark sometimes made of him. The name of the other mate was Simpson Doolittle. He was mildness itself in comparison with Roaring Ben, but the sailors did not like him so well, as he was sly and underhanded. He was a good sailor, though, and this qualification kept him in his position.

Bob and Ralph strove to make as good sailors as their ship-mates, and in the accomplishment of this purpose they were prepared to appreciate every thing agreeable and endure patiently what was disagreeable. One of the

things disagreeable and to be endured was a—big storm.

“Something is coming, Bob!” said Capt. Granby, squinting at his barometer. “See that. Mercury has been a-fallin’. Clouds, too, look bad. Wind is threatenin’.”

He here went to the cabin-door and looked up at the sky, and then across the sea. Ralph stepped forward when he saw the captain and Bob at the cabin-door.

“Watchin’ for the weather, boys,” said Capt. Granby.

“Does it look pretty bad?” inquired Ralph.

“R—r—rether,” remarked the captain oracularly. “I have been caught in this part of the Atlantic once before.”

“Was it a bad storm?” asked Bob.

“Yes, something of a gale, and I think she is coming now. We must make every thing snug to-night, and it will be sunset soon. You see the sea is pretty rough.”

The waves were rolling heavier and angrier, and it seemed as if the *Andromeda* was plunging into a mob of turbulent sea-monsters, all springing at her. She would dash down among them boldly and then come up shivering after

such reckless exposure, trying to shake them off, these huge, cold, frothing beasts of the deep. The vessel carried very little sail. Every inch of canvas exposed to the breeze was swollen out by it till firm as a drum-head on parade-day.

“How the wind howls through the rigging!” exclaimed Ralph to Bob.

“A reg’lar organ,” said the captain, who heard the remark.

From every mast, every spar, every bit of sail, every rope, every boat, every ring-bolt, from every opening anywhere—like a hawser-hole, or that in a block, or in the funnel projecting from the cook’s caboose—the wind rushing about it or through it would evoke some kind of a noise. And all these responses, high or low, shrill or hoarse, like a roar or like a sigh, piping far up on the tenor or roaring far down in the depths of the bass, were combined into a chorus to which the comely maiden Andromeda was forced to be a listener. Then there was the sound of the billows smiting, pounding, bombarding her sides. This was no small feature of the growing uproar. As the boys watched the vexed and noisy sea, and then glanced at the cloudy, sullen sky, they heard the captain say :

“And yet I feel quite safe in the *Andromeda*.”

“You do?” said Ralph, relieved by this remark.

“Yes, we are not near a shore that is waiting to trip us up, but we have plenty of sea-room. Then the vessel is well-built. She is no toy, I tell ye, though she is a leetle old-fashioned. I hope, too, her cap’n and mates know something about managing a ship. You see wrecks are not the rule, but the exception. We must take that into account. Yes, in a good ship I feel safe. We are going to get a good deal tossed up,” said the captain looking about on the heaving, foaming sea, “but I think we shall come out all right.”

The *Andromeda* was very uneasy on that tossing sea. 'Rastus (in full Erastus), the black cook, was just then passing into the cabin, carefully poising in his hand a covered dish, and a lurch of the ship threatened to send him one way and the dish another. He recovered his balance, though, shouting :

“Look out dar, honeys! I tell ye dis am a big storm comin’.”

When he returned he said to the boys :

“If ye git shilled, come in whar dar’s a good fire.”

Ralph and Bob thanked him, and turned into the forecaskle to wait until the watch on deck should be relieved, and their turn might come to go on duty. The sailors were passing in and out, and the most of those that left the forecaskle wore their sou’-westers and oiled suits, for word came that it was beginning to rain. When Bob and Ralph went out they were dressed in like fashion. What a night that was on board the *Andromeda*! a night that was followed by a day as violent, and a second night even wilder. It was a “blow” that lasted two days, and the blow seemed to have rolled all the water-casks in the sky to a point just over the *Andromeda* and then emptied them. It was cataract upon cataract.

“Well, Bob,” said somebody crouching in the shelter of the ship’s rail to windward, the voice issuing from beneath a rough sou’-wester, “how do you stand this? Hold on there.”

“Aye, aye, Ralph,” cried a voice that was heard under the eaves of a second sou’-wester. “I have got a grip on this ring-bolt. I tell ye! Isn’t this tough?”

“Yes, but it has got to blow over sometime. Must be an end to it.”

“If it don’t make an end to us,” added Bob. “I—I do feel shaky about our getting through.”

“Looks like an upset sometimes, I must say. All right, though.”

What? Bob gave a puzzled look at Ralph. They seemed to have changed places. Ralph was likely to show signs of timidity; Bob was the lion, who never cared to turn back from a foe.

“O, what a blow! Let me get under that rail farther,” said Bob, “and get a fresh grip on that bolt again.”

Bob, as he shrank closer up to Ralph, noticed where his jacket parted, and saw a little book sticking up from an inside pocket.

“What’s that book?” said Bob. “Life preserver?”

“Yes,” said Ralph soberly.

Bob knew at once that it was Ralph’s Testament.

“Don’t know,” observed Bob, “but I ought to have mine in my pocket; but the fact is, I don’t know as I have got one.”

“It would not do any harm, Bob. I generally have a pocket Testament about me.”

Ralph was not one who could easily speak about his religious habits. His life, though, spoke for him. That is our best witness to the fact that we own and read the Bible, while we ought to be ready to say a needed word for it.

“I suppose,” said Bob, “a fellow ought to read it, but—but—I don’t seem to get time.”

“O, make time!”

Bob did not like to continue this conversation. He therefore said, “Seems to me, young man, you are unusually calm for you.”

“Am I? Don’t feel so sometimes, but—”

Ralph did not have an opportunity to finish this sentence, for a big sea swept the deck of the *Andromeda*, boiling over and about the two boys, and, if they had not been clinging to a ring-bolt, might have washed both of them overboard. When it had retreated, they arose and ran to the fore-castle. Bob removed his wet clothing and crawled into his bunk. It was not a quiet resting-place, for the vessel was tossing violently, and every thing on board seemed to toss with it. Stretching out and bracing himself against his bunk so as to be as secure as possible,

he returned to the subject about which he and Ralph had been talking when the big wave struck the ship.

“Don’t see why that fellow isn’t more excited,” thought Bob. “It is not his style. Look at him now.”

Glancing out of his berth, Bob saw Ralph sitting on the blue chest that Grandpa Winthrop gave him.

“Reading?” thought Bob. “Yes, he has taken out that Life-preserver, and seems to be looking inside of it. Wonder if that has any thing to do with his calmness! Queer fellow, but I like him!”

To Bob, Ralph was still a “queer fellow.” The perplexing part of this problem of Ralph’s character was an ordinary physical shrinking, and yet at times an extraordinary absence of all fear of consequences, so that in comparison Bob the daring, the reckless, became Bob the timid and fearful. It was when Ralph’s spiritual nature was aroused and his trust in God stimulated, that his thought of self, of shame, of pain was lost in the consciousness of another’s need and his duty to God. It was then that the spiritual in Ralph dominated the natural, and he became

the hero in thought and was ready to be a martyr in reality. The storm at first intimidated him, but in that little "Life-preserver" he had come in contact with certain assurances which floated his soul beyond the reach of any fear. Did not God rule the storm? Was not the unruly sea held a prisoner in his great palm? If the *Andromeda* went to the bottom, Ralph would not go out of the loving grasp of that fatherly Hand. Was not the end of storm—and wreck, even—not only the saving, but bettering, of His children?

"Then I will trust him and be at ease," said Ralph, and while Bob, as he confessed, was at times shivering, Ralph was calm.

"O, dear!" thought Bob, as the ship lurched and threw him out of his previous position in his bunk. "This is a fearfully uneasy ship! What is that?"

His bedding was disturbed by the general upheaval, and he felt at one side of his bunk a hard little object not observed before.

"I should say it was my pocket-book if I had any money in it to make it hard. I will just see what that is. Come up here! Out with you! Why don't you come? Don't you want to be

known? Now I have you! A book! A Bible, I declare! Where did this come from?"

He opened it. He turned to a fly-leaf. There he saw in Alma's handwriting this sentence, "Brother Bob, from Alma and Carrie."

"That is nice!" thought Bob. "Like getting a letter from home. Wonder how it came here!"

He thought Ralph might have been delegated to put it under his bedding, but Ralph knew nothing about it. Not until Bob reached home did he learn the solution of this mystery—that Carrie, the day of the visit of the family to the *Andromeda*, had hid the book away in Bob's bunk. She had thrust it under the mattress, and only the heaving of this storm had disturbed its resting-place.

Bob braced himself firmly in his berth, and, opening to a psalm, began to read the twenty-third, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

"That is good," thought Bob. As he read on, his thoughts went home. Back of Squire Winthrop's house was a very deep, old-fashioned garden. The lower part of it was given up to the green grass that here grew in luxuriance. A brook that flashed across this part of the

garden fed the grass-roots, and gave them a thrifty growth. One summer the squire took it into his head to keep a few sheep, and, tethered here in this grassy inclosure, they would contentedly browse on the juicy verdure, and occasionally cool their noses in the tinkling waters. Bob had been working at intervals that season for the squire, and whenever he was in the garden he loved to make the little flock a call, and see how contented they were in this calm, secluded corner.

“This makes me think of home,” he now said, this stormy day on board the *Andromeda*; “makes me think of the squire’s garden, the green grass, and the sheep there.”

His thoughts did not drift back to the *Andromeda*, but lingered amid the beautiful illustration of the psalm furnished by the squire’s garden.

“That is the way it is with God’s care. Pretty idea!” he thought.

Bob was tired. When out on duty, fighting the storm had been hard work. When he sought his berth, the agitation of the ship made his rest uneasy and fragmentary. He craved inward calm also. As he lay there, this opened Bible

before him, Squire Winthrop's far-away garden seemed to open to him. He was also among the sheltered, cherished sheep. He heard the words, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Gradually the book drooped in his hand. His eyes occasionally would shut. Then he would open them, raise his Bible, read a line, and another drowsy spell would steal over him. He would start, look about him, brace himself stoutly in his bunk, read, think of the squire's garden, grow calm and drowsy once more.

"Why," said Ralph, approaching his berth, "Bob has gone to sleep! Got a book in his hand! The sleep will do him good."

The sleep indeed did him good, and the finding of the book a greater good. Ever after, with the Bible was associated Squire Winthrop's grassy garden-patch and the little flock there, and then would steal into his soul a pleasant sense of rest and security.

"I ought to read my Bible," he said, "and I will begin right off."

Fair weather soon came. The sun threw back from his bright face the dark, muffling cowl of the storm. The waves went submissively down before their great, radiant superior in the sky,

confessing his power. The *Andromeda* spread its sails above, while below the carpenter went from spot to spot, repairing the damaged rails, mending the ruptured wood-work about the cook's and sailors' quarters, making every thing trim and tight again. At last, it did not look at all as if there had been a violent duel in which *Andromeda* and the sea-monsters were the opposing sides, *Andromeda* getting the worst of it; but this stanch maiden was herself again. Fair weather duties were resumed by the crew. Life went back to its old courses. Bob, though, did not go back to his old neglect of the Bible. He read it regularly. From it he took thoughts that promised sometime to be the seed of a life radically different from that in the past.

CHAPTER VIII.

MIGHT TRY.

CAPTAIN GRANBY was not a religious man. On the other hand, he was not hostile to religion. He respected its forms after a fashion, though he did not observe them. When Sunday came, although he never attempted to secure for his men a religious service, he would yet say:

“Slick up, men! Play you were goin’ to church, and get out your go-to-meetin’ clothes.”

All day there would huddle on the deck a flock of men better dressed than on other days. They would be likely to sport mammoth neckties with huge flapping ends like sails. Some would appear in white duck pants. The captain would make their work as light as he could, and tell 'Rastus to “feed out a little better grub than common.” This was “keepin’ Sunday.”

The great vice of the *Andromeda's* crew was profanity. Ralph and Bob had never been

guilty of it, and the crew's very free habit of blasphemy shocked them into an intenser aversion to it, especially Ralph. Captain Granby was not clear of this taint, but he was far less infected by it than his men. He issued this discriminating order, as he considered it, for the first day of the week :

“Now, my men, no swearin' on Sunday. If you must be heathen on six days out of the seven, don't be that the fust day. Mind your manners now, and quit your swearin' on Sunday.”

Captain Granby, with an oath, gave emphasis to his famous order on profanity, and declared that “Sunday should be respected.” The crew were more particular after the issue of that order.

“Sunday—that is the day when we get less work and more grub,” observed one of the crew to Ralph and Bob.

Ralph, though, wondered if something more could not be done to notice the day.

“Hardly know what,” he reflected, “and yet I think something might be done.”

In his kit he had an old Sunday-school hymnal, and as he and Bob were good singers, and

were familiar with many of the selections, Ralph sometimes would pull out the book on Sunday, and in a very modest way, when the fore-castle was empty, they would try some of the tunes identified with home. There were men disposed to ridicule the "chaplain," as they called Ralph, while they nicknamed Bob "the deacon," until he said to them :

"Don't you deacon me."

A few encouraged the boys to sing on. There was a gray-haired sailor whom the crew had named "The old man." His real name was John Wilson, a quiet, meditative man, saying very little, and disposed to keep aloof from the crew, though messing and working and bunking side by side with them. He surprised Ralph, one Sunday, with a remark made on deck. Ralph and the old man were leaning over the rail, watching the sunset. There was a bank of fair-weather purple in the west, through which the light broke in lines and rifts as if these were golden cords that looped up rich Tyrian drapery. A young moon above the purple bank was shining with a soft, silver radiance. Not far off the evening star had kindled its peaceful rays. The scene was one to invite serious contempla-

tion. Several sailors besides Ralph and the old man, dressed in their so-called Sunday rig, were watching the same scene.

“Makes me think of home and the folks,” observed the old man. “Has a good effect, like your singing.”

“Thank you,” said Ralph, pleased to receive this compliment.

“I wish myself you would sing more. Don’t know as you would think it, but I was brought up that way. I was baptized. I belong to the Church. No, you might not think so.”

Ralph did not interrupt him, but allowed him to continue these remarks.

“Now, I would like to hear some more of them tunes. I have an idee that if you asked the cap’n he might make it sort of reg’lar on Sunday—let us have it, say, in the for’c’stle at a certain hour. And if you could make a prayer, say, chaplain, and read a leetle Scriptur’ it would seem sort of like old times.”

“O—O!” said the blushing, embarrassed Ralph, “I—I didn’t think of that!”

“Why not?” asked Wilson coolly. “I have been thinking it over. Couldn’t you pick up a few prayers somewhere? I am sure we all

need 'em bad enough. There are some good prayers people have written, if you can't make one up yourself. And a leetle Scriptur', you know, chaplain."

Ralph stammered out an attempt at a reply, saying he would think it over.

"I didn't know as you would have any objection, chaplain," said Wilson in tones of disappointment. "If a thing is right, you know—"

That appeal stimulated Ralph's shrinking nature.

"Right, you know," continued Wilson, "that seems to settle it; but then, 'scuse me, I ought not to tell other folks what to do. Perhaps, if I had the eddication, I might not be backward myself, and might do more toward helpin' this keepin' Sunday. Of course, it is right."

Unconsciously, Wilson had struck a key in Ralph's moral nature that never yet had failed to respond to any appeal to it. Without any false self-assertion, Ralph knew well enough that he had what Wilson called the "eddication." He had advanced beyond Bob in his studies, and would have entered college had his health permitted it. Another thing he appreciated. He understood thoroughly the fact that, though

in the fore-castle, he was the relative of one having great pecuniary interests in the ship, and he rather than Wilson would be the one to interview Captain Granby.

“I ought not to let him think of doing it, poor old Wilson. I won’t shirk if somebody must do it. Yes, I’ll make the effort; do my duty, come what will. Perhaps God’s hand is in it all. I might try; yes, I might try.”

He thought a moment, and in his decided way, so characteristic of him when duty had been made plain, resolved to go to Captain Granby at once.

Ralph was obliged to expel several hindering lumps from his throat, but he made known his errand.

“Capital!” said the captain. “I say that right off, though you might not expect it of me. Another thing, Ralph, I think it would have a good effect on the men. We are all of us miserable sinners and need something, and, any way, I notice sayin’ prayers on board a ship don’t hurt the discipline. You go ahead and I’ll back ye up.”

Ralph went away, saying to himself:

“That is encouraging. There’s the ‘old man’

feeling the way he does, and the cap'n talking this fashion. Did not know they had those thoughts."

In a land that seems dry and barren, no one can tell what waters may flow beneath the surface until some driven well shall search and find out the springs hidden there and ready to bubble out. In the heart that seems without interest, the surface of whose life seems withered and blasted, may be accumulated hidden waters of feeling that flow out in some unusual moment of spiritual test and trial.

"Well, chaplain, you have got yourself into business on Sunday," jokingly observed Bob to Ralph.

"Dare say; but, if I am in, you are too. I don't mean to leave you out."

"Oh-h-O! How's that?"

"You have got to be chorister."

Bob demurred, but Ralph could not excuse him. These very humble Sunday services were begun with that understanding between the two; Ralph was chaplain, but Bob was chorister. Some of the crew ridiculed the plan of Sunday services, but the majority were on the side of a respectful keeping of the day, and declared

“Let’s have them! They won’t hurt us. We’ll stand by you, chaplain.”

One might have supposed that the sailor who resembled the picture in the hall of the old Winthrop house would have had for these services a look more hostile than that in the ancient picture even. To the surprise of Ralph and Bob he was an earnest supporter of the services.

“Can’t account for it!” thought Bob. “It isn’t his style.”

It was not Steve’s style, and yet he did the courteous thing, coming into the forecastle at the time of the services and behaving with propriety. Horace Haviland was there also. “I feel I ought to sustain them from a town interest,” declared Horace to Ralph and Bob. “You chaps come from the same town, you know.”

The “services” consisted, for the greater part, of singing. A chapter was read from the Bible, the Lord’s Prayer said, and Ralph added two other prayers. Ralph had only his own hymnal, but he multiplied the tunes and hymns. There were several good penmen among the crew, and Ralph secured their help as copyists. The tunes had various degrees of popularity, but those that the sailors did like they used through the week

at all hours. They might be heard down in the fore-castle evenings; or perhaps in the depths of midnight, when the *Andromeda* in the moon-light was racing across a field of liquid silver, two or three strong deep voices would catch up and bear away one of the "chaplain's" hymns.

"Well, chaplain," Roaring Ben said one day, "I think your Sunday singin' is a good move. You know we seamen have libraries on board ship oftentimes; I shall recommend in the future that they always put into 'em something to sing out of."

"Well, chaplain," Roaring Ben began again, "good as this Sunday singin' is, I don't know as you will catch 'em all."

"I see that they all don't get into the Sunday singing."

This was the name generally given to the fore-castle services, and the title was a relief to Ralph, who timidly shrank from the idea that he was conducting any thing so important or responsible as "religious services."

"Haven't seen 'Volcano' there, chaplain."

"No; Vol, I believe, hasn't put his head inside the for'c'stle during the Sunday singing."

Volcano (a name generally shortened to

“Vol”) was the nickname of a sailor who was shockingly profane. Any expression was generally fired up with blasphemy, but when he was excited, his profane eruptions were frightful. This sad peculiarity gave him his cognomen. Captain Granby, as little inclined as he was to be reverent, would never have kept him on board the *Andromeda*, had he not been a thorough whaleman. He would have been made an officer, had it not been for this offensive habit.

“Profanity is bad enough in a servant,” said one ship owner, to whom a friend had ventured to commend Rufus Ring as a worthy candidate for a mateship. “I am not willing to put profanity in office.”

Neither Ralph nor Bob supposed that Rufus Ring, *alias* Vol, would come to the Sunday singing. One Sunday afternoon, though, Ralph took occasion, during the singing of a hymn, to go up on deck. He left Bob in charge of the tune, a dozen sons of Neptune roaring out their faithful assistance. Ralph had missed 'Rastus the cook, and wished to step to his galley and urged him to come to the forecastle, if possible, knowing that 'Rastus's sympathies were with the

service. Turning away from the galley after leaving his message for the cook, and facing the hatchway leading to the forecastle, he saw a sailor bending over it and looking down, as if eager to catch every note that was coming up. When Ralph reached the man he was surprised to see in the face that tried to turn away and look unconcerned, the leader of the profanity of the crew, Rufus Ring. Ralph was very confident also that he saw tears glistening in the eyes of Vol, but the movement of his face was so rapid as it turned that Ralph could not be positive in his opinion.

“Still,” thought Ralph, “I do believe the man is crying.”

Vol quickly went to the vessel's rail, and, leaning over it, looked down at the sea. Ralph had one of his spasms of timidity, and then, as conscience said, “You ought to speak to that man and ask him down into the forecastle,” Ralph stepped up to him, laid his hand on his shoulder, and said pleasantly, “Rufus!”

“What say, chaplain?” replied Rufus very soberly, not looking up, but still gazing at the water shivering into a thousand crystals along the vessel's side.

“Won’t you come down and sing with us?”

Ralph expected that an oath would be flung at him, but, to his surprise, he was addressed in ordinary English, “Why didn’t you ask me before?”

“I—I wish I had, but I thought that as a rule, a general notice might do. However, I wish I had spoken to you. Come now, please.”

Ralph was still looking for a bomb-shell in the shape of an oath. It did not come. The blasphemer came, though. He followed Ralph down into the fore-castle, and then, with a half-ashamed air, sneaked to the rear of the men, and there, sitting on an old chest, listened intently, but holding his head down.

The singing, that afternoon, was of a peculiarly pleading, penitential nature.

“O, Jesus, thou art standing
Outside the fast-closed door,”

was one of the hymns. They were all very direct in their invitations to the slumbering soul. They were door-knocks of an imperative character, like those given in the night, echoing through the deserted hall and startling all who hear.

When the singing was over and the chaplain had made two or three prayers, very short and humble, the men went away. Ralph and Bob passed up on deck also. It was a marvelous sunset, for, as the sun sank in the west, a silvery moon in all its glory rose in the east and rested on the water. It seemed as if one of the fabulous structures sometimes said to exist under the waves had come up to prove the accuracy of those fancies, and lifted this shining dome. There, in the east, the water became silver—the whitest, as if molten. In the west, the ocean was a vast flame of crimson. As Ralph watched the marvelous contrast, he was conscious very soon that Bob had left him, and that the next moment somebody had approached him. He looked up, and there was Vol.

“Could I say a word?” asked Rufus.

“O yes, do!”

The man was very pale when he began to speak. His face was something like that white sea heaving between the vessel and the moon. As he went on, his face flushed with emotion. Once it was scarlet as the western sea, for it burned with some feeling of shame.

“Chaplain, I have been an awful man, and in

our talk now I may rip out a lot of oaths before I get through. I am trying to keep 'em down, swallow 'em. If I do say any thing that is not right, remember I try to put it down. Fact is, it is a habit."

Here Vol was true to his old habit, and almost involuntarily made his language emphatic with an oath.

"We folks who swear—and you have heard enough of 'em—do it in part from habit. I don't believe those who are swearers always prefer to stay so. Habit, you know, holds like a vise. But there; I wanted to tell you how I got interested in your meetin's. I was opposed to them. But last Sunday you sang a kind of child's hymn, and do you know how it takes hold of me? I came round to-day to hear outside, for I darsen't go down to sit with the men, but I came to hear. That very hymn my boy sang when dying, chaplain."

"What hymn?"

Vol spoke in a hollow tone of voice,

"O, I couldn't give it now! You didn't know I had a home once, a wife and child. Of course not. Well, the wife went, and the boy, and when he was dying I swore at God, to think

he would take away my boy. What did that sick little feller do? He tried to sing what you had 'tother Sunday and to-day. Yes, when his eyes were glassy and his tongue stammered, one line came out like a bird's note, and then it stopped. His voice died all away, he was—gone—”

Rufus here hung his head and wept bitterly. Ralph did not check him, but let his grief have its way.

“Somehow, after that it seemed as if the oath I took against God has had the mastery of me ever since, but I don't know—that hymn broke me up.”

“What was it?” Ralph ventured to ask.

Looking off toward the east, and not the west, toward the rising light of hope, and not that of the departing day, Rufus Ring repeated these words :

“ ‘ Jesus loves me, and he watches
Over me with loving eye ;
And he sends his holy angels
Safe to keep me till I die.
Jesus loves me—O, Lord Jesus,
Now I pray thee, by thy love
Keep me ever pure and holy
Till I come to thee above.’ ”

O, how Ralph wished for wisdom, that he might know what to say! He felt that he must say something. When he spoke, his words seemed very mean and powerless. It was just this:

“Rufus, I—I—I’ll pray for you.”

As Ralph spoke, he wrung the hand of Rufus and left him. In a moment he came back.

“Rufus,” he said, “you pray, too.”

Rufus neither nodded his head in assent nor moved his lips in dissent. He only stared in silence at the rippling water. Ralph again left him.

One day, when Ralph and Bob were up on the main topgallant yard taking in sail, the dark blue sea tossing under them, and the clouds in a darkening sky tossing above them, Bob said to his mate:

“Ralph, what is the matter with Volcano nowadays? He is strangely quiet, for him. He don’t rip out as he used to. He was an awful swearer.”

“He never said he would do it, Bob, mind you, but I have an idea he has been praying.”

“O, that is it! Thought it was something, but could’nt say what.”

“Yes, I think that is it. It steadies him down wonderfully. It steadies any one.”

Bob in silence clutched the folds of the sail, gathered them in, and secured them. In silence, also, he descended from the yard when his work was over and went to the fore-castle and stretched out in his bunk.

“I want to think,” he said.

Lying there he recalled his conversation with Ralph about Volcano.

“Then Vol has got something to steady him down, something to keep him quiet,” thought Bob. “Guess I need what Vol has got. Where’s the girls’ Bible? Now where shall I read first?”

He found the psalm about the Good Shepherd, read it, and said:

“That is good! That is good! I—I suppose I ought not to be satisfied with just reading. I need something, I-know well enough.”

Bob Walker needed the very element in his life which Rufus Ring had come into possession of—prayer, like a rudder, to steady and hold him in a course where every day good impulses from heaven would visit him even as wind the sails of a ship. When would he possess this

blessing which, possessing him, would control all the movements of his life ?

While Bob was influenced by the "Sunday singing," Ralph had occasion to reflect that "might try" was a motto worth the remembrance and a repetition in other things.

CHAPTER IX.

ROUND THE NUB OF A CONTINENT.

FAR away into the rough, chilling waters of an antarctic sea runs the nub of a continent, Cape Horn. It is the most southerly point of the far-reaching continent of America. Once, every sail that went from the Atlantic to the Pacific flew along the waters of the Strait of Magellan. The famous navigator, Magellan, was sailing one day along the coast of South America, trying to find a break in its long wall by which he could reach the Moluccas—islands in the far East. This project of the sixteenth century, to find the East by going west, was one of vast importance. It was in harmony with the theory that the earth was round as an orange, but nobody had proved it by actually going round the world. If he, Magellan, could strike the Moluccas by steadfastly striking out toward the west, a nice geographical theory would be experimentally settled, and a valuable roadway for commerce opened. He must therefore go

through America or round it somewhere. He sailed down the coast of South America, hunting with vigilant eyes for a gateway to the west, and finally reached Patagonia. He found a strait, which he eagerly followed. It opened before him as he pressed forward, until its waters widened into a great sea, without any hint of a shore beneath the misty horizon. So pleased was he with this ocean that he called it the Pacific, and over it he went joyfully sailing. He did not himself live to reach home, but his ship came again to Spain, from which it started, the first to belt the world with the silvery furrow of its long, daring voyage.

Magellan was a Portuguese in the employ of Spain, and for over ninety years all the world that wanted to go from Europe to Asia by sailing west followed the flag that opened up to commerce that far-off Patagonian strait.

The seventeenth century came, bringing with it the year 1616, and the venturesome Hollander, William Schouten. He came into those bright, chilling southern waters in his old Dutch tub. He poked farther south than the Strait of Magellan, and one day he saw what? An unknown nub of land, the rough waters vigor-

ously tossing all about it. He pressed past it—and—hurrah! he had reached the big Pacific by doubling that unknown cape! He gratefully thought of the old-fashioned town, Hoorn, where a Dutch mother rocked his cradle when he was a crying, sleepy baby, and from a Holland town that stubborn projection into the sea, that nub of a continent, took its name, Cape Hoorn, or Horn. The flag of Holland had outflanked the flag of Spain, and a Schouten won from Magellan a division of the honors of southern discovery.

The *Andromeda* had now run so far south that the doubling of the cape at the end of the inhabited world might daily be expected.

“We can’t tell what weather to look for,” Captain Granby had said to his officers, “but we will be ready for whatever may come as we double old Horn. May have a big sou’-west blow, cold weather, and a craft outward bound will be bothered day after day, just layin’-to, ice on her hull and riggin’, you know. We will be ready, send down some of our spars, make fast our anchors, boats, too, and we will just have an eye out for the scuttle-butts and the cook’s galley.”

Every thing was made tight, and the *Andromeda* gallantly headed for the Pacific. The weather stiffened off Cape Horn's vixenish shores, but the captain said it would be "a blow from the sou'-east, and that will put us along lively." It was nothing short of "lively" for two days, but the *Andromeda* sped gallantly away and came out in waters less vexed and violent.

"Have we doubled the cape?" Bob asked Roaring Ben.

"She's doubled, the old squaw!" answered the mate. "We can't get along without her, and we have little peace living with her. However, she is left behind."

One experience, though, at this part of the voyage was fated not to be left behind. It followed Bob even as a long furrow of foam coldly rustles in the rear of a vessel's flight.

"Cold weather," exclaimed Bob one morning, as he met Steve Wyckham on deck.

"Eh?" replied Steve.

"Cold, I say," and Bob slapped his hands together energetically.

"Why don't you prayin' folks ask for warmer weather?" said Steve sarcastically. "I notice

you talk awful poor when you are on your feet, but down on your knees you are awful rich."

"Perhaps," replied Bob, "we need you for an example."

"Deliver us from hypocrites!" shouted Steve, moving off.

"You mean the feller needed for an example."

"No, I don't. I don't make any pretensions."

Steve walked away with a face of wrath.

Bob hardly knew how to interpret the meaning of this outburst from Steve. The latter had once been very friendly to Bob. To Ralph, Steve was almost cringing, an attitude that Ralph had reason to interpret as simply a bid by Steve for the favor of one who might interest a ship-owner in Steve's favor. While Steve's demeanor toward Ralph had not changed in its degree of warmth, toward Bob there had been recently a sudden cooling. Steve also attempted before Ralph to say prejudicial things about Bob. Ralph did not allow him to do this successfully, but he could not head off Steve's unfriendly spirit. That remained, and Bob and Ralph both noticed it, and wondered at it. It was Steve's evident purpose to injure Bob in

Ralph's opinion. Why he had this purpose, he did not declare. One might safely have attributed it to Steve's wish in general to do harm wherever he had an opportunity. He was not popular with the crew. He was regarded as a selfish, treacherous fellow, very changeful in his likes. When friendly, he was suspected of secret unfriendliness, and only when hostile openly was he regarded as sincere. What enjoyment could one take in his company? Bob was destined to find it very disagreeable after this passage round the cape.

The morning when Bob had informed Steve that it was cold weather, and in return had received some sarcastic advice, he then went to the fore-castle, saying to himself, "Old pickles! Well, he sha'n't spoil my morning for me. I am not going to lose my good temper for him, and I wont stay cold for him. I'll just step down into the fore-castle and look in my chest for those new mittens Alma handed me when I left home."

Bob had been wearing an old pair of mittens when he felt the need of any protection for his hands, and these he wore sparingly, at first, lest the epithet "land-lubber" might be thrown at

him. A laud-lubber no longer, he felt that he might wear what he pleased. He now opened his chest and began to overhaul his few but precious possessions. Several seamen were there in the fore-castle, lying in their bunks or lounging on any chest that might be unoccupied. Rufus Ring was there, also "the old man," Wilson, Horace Haviland, and Ralph. While Bob was hunting through his chest, whistling away carelessly, Steve came down into the fore-castle. Bob's whistle abruptly ceased. He sprang up, flourished the new mittens which he had found, and shouted, "Here are the beauties!" He was about to pull one over his hand when a silver dollar rolled out of the mitten, and, as it struck the floor, what a sharp, metallic ring it gave!

"Whew-w-w!" exclaimed Bob. "Aint I rich? O, my! Wonder where that came from!"

The dollar had rolled to the feet of Steve, as if he were a magician with some strange power over coin, and had willed it that way.

"I can tell you where it came from!" angrily shouted Steve. "Stolen goods! That's what the dollar is."

Every body looked up in surprise at this accusation save Bob. He only laughed.

“Nonsense!” he said. “Ha—ha! That’s ridiculous. I don’t know any thing about stolen goods. Who the owner of that dollar may be, is a mystery to me.”

“No mystery to me. If any body takes any thing of mine, I know what to call it.”

“Nonsense!” said Bob, trying to treat as a triviality a matter which Steve regarded as serious. “I don’t know any thing about that dollar. I don’t know how it came there, and—and—you don’t know that it’s yours, either. How can you tell?”

“How can I tell?” growled Steve, looking more like a bull-dog than ever, now on guard over this piece of money lying at his feet. “How can *I* tell? All, notice! Every body! See, see!”

All in the fore-castle fastened their eyes on Steve.

“I claim that this silver dollar is mine, for I can see here, from the way the light strikes it, that it has a cross on it. And look again! Listen, every body! I’ll make this test. Some one of you may take up that dollar—I won’t

touch it—and I don't hesitate to say that you will find on the other side my initials, S. W. W. All I ask is for fair play!"

One more person had now entered the fore-castle, though nobody had looked up to see who it might be. When Steve had finished, the new-comer caught up the last words, "fair play," and repeated them. All in the fore-castle turned to him, and saw one whose hobby was "fair play." It was Roaring Ben.

"Fair play," said Ben. "What is the row? You fellers down here make more noise than breakers on a lee shore."

"Row is jest this: That dollar down there—mind ye, I haven't touched it—is mine. It rolled out of mittens that Bob there took out of his chest, and yet he claims to know nothin' about it."

"Nonsense!" once more exclaimed Bob, trying to laugh. "I don't know about your dollar."

"The first thing," said Roaring Ben, in a very dignified and judicial tone, as if he were a very judge, "the first thing, Wyckham, is to be able to prove that the dollar is yours. How do you know that?"

Here Roaring Ben placed himself by the side of Bob, as if he meant to see that "fair play" was given the boy. With his shaggy head he rose up like a lion before the menacing bull-dog guarding the dollar at his feet.

"How do I know? Mind ye, I haven't touched it—"

"You have said that once already. That isn't proof," was the reminder of the lion and judge.

"And I say it again if I want to. I do say it that I haven't touched it, and it means a good deal when I claim that if you turn that over you'll find my initials on it, S. W. W. There! I'll rest my whole case on that; yes, rest it there."

Steve said this with great complacency, as if he not only had a good case, but the others must see that he could talk like a lawyer in the presence of this great judge, Roaring Ben.

"We will see how it may be," said Roaring Ben. Stooping he picked up the dollar that had been the sudden occasion of all this sudden uproar. The others gathered about the mate and looked with him. It was a moment of eager, silent suspense!

“Where is it?” asked the mate, after looking and turning the dollar over—“‘S. W. W. ;’ where is it?”

“It is there! I can make it out!” exclaimed Horace.

Yes, the letters “S. W. W.” were on the other side of the silver dollar.

“Where? where?” asked Bob eagerly.

“There!” said Roaring Ben.

Bob could trace the letters on the dollar.

“Well, what does that prove?” asked Bob. “I don’t know any thing about it.”

“One can say this much: it don’t look exactly right,” said the judge.

Bob did not laugh now, but, realizing that the matter had a serious aspect, affirmed:

“Somebody must have put it in the mitten.”

“Of course!” said Steve triumphantly. “Who stole it, hid it! That’s so!”

“No, sir!” shouted Bob indignantly. “I could take my oath—”

“I wouldn’t take any oaths,” said Steve sarcastically.

“But,” said Bob, “I am innocent, and God knows it.”

Bob’s loud, emphatic disavowal of all wrong,

his look of abhorrence, his whole attitude of manly protest, had its effect for a moment, and there was silence in the fore-castle. Steve broke the silence :

“ Well, there are the facts ! Make what you can out of them.”

“ I am not the only one that could go to my chest and put a dollar in my mitten,” said Bob.

“ Do you mean that I went to your chest, hunted up your mittens, and put the dollar there ?” asked Steve. “ Do you keep your chest open or locked ?”

“ I—I—I—”

“ Tell me.”

“ I generally have kept it locked.”

“ Ginerally ? I guess always.”

“ Not the first part of the voyage, but I have the last part, and I shall always now. I wont have a repetition of this thing.”

“ Shouldn’t think you would want it,” replied Steve, with a sneer.

The situation of things in the fore-castle was now exceedingly interesting. All felt, for even Bob could not deny it, that the coin must be Steve’s. Otherwise it could not have been so exactly identified by him. The point to be

ascertained was, who placed it in Bob's mitten? If Bob put it there, he was a thief. If somebody else had made a hiding-place of the mitten, who was it?

Ralph now stepped forward and began to speak. The others listened carefully, for he was credited by the crew with the ownership of "a good head," and then his shipmates had confidence in his character. Was he not Squire Winthrop's relative? He was sure of a hearing.

"I don't think there is any proof that either Bob or Steve put the dollar in that mitten, and proof is what we want. Bob has kept his chest locked up for a long time, so that another might and could not get—"

"Might have a key that would fit it," said one of the spectators.

It was never known who said this. Gradually almost all of the crew, hearing of the matter, had flocked down into the fore-castle. Even Captain Granby had arrived. Somebody in the rear made this last remark, implicating another than Bob. The voice sounded to Bob like Horace Haviland's, and a second voice murmured, "Might be so."

"Until we know positively about this thing,"

rang out Ralph's clear, echoing voice, "let us not have our suspicions, but credit both sides with the fair thing. As for Bob, does it seem reasonable that a fellow should steal and then bring the money forward in this way? Would he be such a fool?"

"No," replied a voice.

"I would like to ask Steve when he had this dollar last," said Ralph.

Steve was puzzled to answer this, and stut-tered :

"I—I—I—can't say."

"Did you or have you had it during the voy-
age?"

"N—n—o, think not."

"Did you have it in New York?"

"Don't remember."

Here Captain Granby, who had been picking up the threads of the story, and had woven out some idea of its details, interjected this inquiry :

"Sure you can't remember?"

"Don't remember."

Here a voice from the entrance cried out :

"How 'bout Oldburyport, Stebe? Hab it dar?"

Bob turned in the direction of the voice, and

there was 'Rastus, the black cook, his big eyes rolling round excitedly. He had left the galley when he had heard about matters in the fore-castle, and had ventured thus far.

"Come, come, 'Rastus," said Captain Granby reprovingly, "you go and get your work done up in the galley. I will ask questions."

The cook went away muttering to himself:

"Don't beliebe dat Bob stole de dollar, see if I do. Cap'n mout jes' lemme ax one question."

His big, clumsy feet shuffled across the deck to his galley, and sliding back the door he then drew it forward with a slam. Shut up with his stove and his soup, he was not seen again till dinner-time.

"I would like to have the question of 'Rastus put to my accuser—if he was in a condition to remember every thing that happened in Oldburyport," said Bob, giving the last clause in half-suppressed tones.

"What condition?" shouted Steve.

"You know," replied Bob.

"I know that I sha'n't take any impudence from you," again shouted Steve.

"If a young mulatto was here, I wouldn't

need to ask about your condition as I saw it," said Bob.

"What was his condition?" asked Captain Granby. "I heard of him in Oldburyport, but did not see him there."

"Drunk, sir. How did he know what he did with his money?"

There was laughter among the crew. Steve was now flaming.

"I am not here to be overhauled. Besides, what has that got to do with the mittens? No matter what I did in Oldburyport. I—I—I—"

"I was drunk," squeaked a voice. Again there was a laugh.

"Quiet!" ordered the captain promptly. "Give every body a chance."

"If we want any thing, it is proof," declared Steve. "If that young feller can prove he is innocent, let him do it. It is my dollar. I am not anxious to have it again till I get into port. The cap'n may take it and keep it for me, and in the meantime, if that—that—feller can show he is all right in his record, let him do it."

"I am right," roared Bob, the single curl of dark hair on his forehead showing prominently, as it always did when he was excited.

“That remains to be seen,” said Steve saucily.

“I will take charge of this case,” remarked Captain Granby. “If we can get light, I shall welcome it. Without plain, clear evidence I am not willing to believe that there is any wrongdoing. We will wait, men, and waiting may bring us light on this case.”

Light on *that case!* If ever there was a mystery, it now shrouded with its shadows the dollar in Captain Granby’s keeping, that silver coin cross-marked on one side, and on the other bearing the letters S. W. W. Captain Granby would sometimes take it out from a little drawer in his desk and closely examine it.

“Why don’t you speak, and tell us your history?” he said one day. “Where is your tongue? Were you ever in Oldburyport? Were you ever in New York? Were you ever—anywhere? Did Bob put you in those mittens? Did Steve stick you there?”

The dollar was as dumb a coin as ever was struck off at the mint, and made no reply.

This case aroused an intense excitement among the crew. Bob was popular, and the men did not wish to think him guilty. Still, there was an under-current of suspicion in spite

of their assertion of his honesty. They were ready to think Steve was guilty of mischief and somehow had introduced the coin among the articles of Bob's clothing in his chest. They could not, however, prove what some were anxious to believe. Steve was thus under a cloud of suspicion, but how could both Bob and Steve be guilty? The case was perplexing.

The coin in the meantime made no confession. When Captain Granby opened his drawer containing the dollar, a ray of sunshine stealing through the little cabin-window might fall on the coin, as if to say, "Here is light! Now, shed some yourself! Speak!" It still was dumb. A moonbeam came through the same window one night. It touched with its silver wand the dead dollar, and left it dead and dumb. It still had no light to give, no word to say. For any thing it lacked, the crew made up in the use of their busy tongues. Others far away were set at last to talking.

Captain Granby had said to the men, "We shall be likely to meet a homeward-bound vessel. Make up a mail and I will get the captain of the craft to take our letters home."

Steve in that way sent to relatives a long ac-

count of his fine success as a whaleman, but said he had been shabbily treated by an Oldburyport boy, a Bob Walker, a sort of a low chap whom he had caught stealing. Bob and Ralph, not thinking that any ugly stories which needed correction might go home, wrote about their life in general, and said nothing about the charge of stealing brought against Bob.

Bob reported to Alma that going to sea was "sort of tough," but he felt he was earning some money, and that was a compensation. He reported that Ralph's health was much better, and that the crew called him "chaplain," and Bob also gave an account of the Sunday singing. Ralph wrote to Squire Winthrop that he thought Bob was making a splendid sailor, and he felt also that Bob every way was doing well. If the two boys had known what a news-bag Steve would send to his relatives, they would have made some reply to his charge. As it was, Ralph remarked to himself, "I am glad I haven't got to say any thing about Bob's affair. I can't, can't think Bob is guilty, and yet if I had to allow that a dollar belonging to another was found in Bob's chest, I might not, if I tried, make people at home feel as I do. I believe he will turn out

all right by and by, and can make others see it ; but now, I can prove nothing."

The Wyckham mail-bag went off, therefore, with its grave charges, as if stuffed with bombs. The Wyckham mail was opened and the bombs thrown round to strike and explode wherever they would. O, what sorrow they occasioned in the old house that the Walkers occupied, for there the bombs struck and wounded without mercy. We will leave the ship on the Pacific awhile, and follow the vessel carrying the Wyckham mail and that of the others to the United States.

CHAPTER X.

A CLOUD THAT GROWS.

IT was a day on the edge of winter. The two elms in front of the old house next to "the brick block" were in a continual unrest, so windy was the day. They faced one another, and with long, leafless branches, as if with the arms of pugilists, they threshed one another. The air was raw, chilly, penetrating. The sky was uneven, and restless with the passage of clouds that moved in waves. It was one of those days when if every thing be pleasant inside the house, warm and comfortable, and if no sickness or sorrow be there, then any outside discomfort never seems to cross the threshold. There is a satisfaction even in thinking it is so chilly and unattractive without. We face at twilight the open fire and pleasurably watch the flames play up into the broad-mouthed chimney, and are rather glad that there is a black, bleak night darkening out-doors. It will make our open fire all the more agreeable. Let trouble, though, be

in-doors, and then it seems as if the weather had got into the house. The fire looks dull. There are hoarse, melancholy voices roaring down the chimney. There is a cold draught felt as we hurry through the hall.

For some reason Alma felt, this particular day when our chapter opens, that the ugly weather was getting into the house. She had no definite reason for saying so. Things outwardly were moving along agreeably. Her father had sufficient work as janitor of the brick block to insure the payment of the rent of the house, and there was a surplus, even, to go toward bread and butter. Alma's school brought in a little harvest of money, and the store, too, contributed quite a satisfactory quota of profit. Squire Winthrop, in accordance with a previous arrangement, allowed Mr. Walker to draw a certain fraction of the wages that would be due Bob, month by month. All these re-enforcements made a power strong enough to push hungry winter-weather back from the door-step and keep its growls outside the house. This day, however, Alma, hurrying through the hall in the morning, shrugged her shoulders and said, "Ugh! winter is coming fast!" The portrait

seemed more unfriendly than usual. That old Winthrop ancestor—if he were one—scowled more seriously over his shoulder, and seemed to be saying more emphatically than ever, “This young lady is not wanted here. I belong here.”

Then Mary Haviland came into the little shop early. Her gray hair was confusedly fluttering about the rim of her bonnet, and her sharp blue eyes, while kindly, had a startled, restless look. Somehow Mary seemed to be sure to come when trouble was coming, a coincidence that the observing Alma had noticed a number of times.

“You all well up here?” said Mary, looking about uneasily, as if expecting to find a sick member of the family.

“Why, yes,” said Alma.

“Heard your father cough on the street yesterday,” said Mary.

“Dare say you did, Mary, but folks cough and yet are not sick.”

“Yes, y—e—s,” said Mary, “but I didn’t know.”

When she went out she glanced around the shop as if expecting still to find that invalid.

“Sympathetic creature!” thought Alma.

“Now she heard father cough, and she felt troubled and came to inquire about him. That is all there is to it. I feel relieved. How pleasant it is beginning to look out-doors. Weather changing?”

No, there had been no change in the disagreeable weather. The sky was like a troubled sea. The wind moaned. The contentious elms still quarreled with one another, beating as they roared and roaring as they beat.

“Yes,” said Alma, rocking contentedly in a chair that had been very softly cushioned by her mother, “it is beginning to look quite pleasant out-doors.”

She had no sooner finished this sentence than a hack came splashing through the mud accumulating in the street, and it halted at the door of the old house.

“Why, what is that?” asked Alma, not accustomed to see hacks halting at the door of a home too poor to think of riding.

The driver had dismounted, and, turning the knob of the hack-door, let out two men.

“One is Dr. Bates,” thought Alma.

And these two assisted a third to dismount. Then they led him toward the house.

“Why, it is father!” she exclaimed, springing up from her chair, and rushing to the front door. “Something has happened!”

The sparkle died out of her rich, lustrous eyes, and the glow faded from her cheeks like all the crimson from the sunset sky.

Dr. Bates and his assistant, Thomas Haviland, brother of Horace and Mary, almost lifted Mr. Walker in their arms, so helpless was he when he reached the steps.

“Why, father, what is the matter?” asked Alma, stretching out her arms.

“I will tell you, Miss Walker. Just show us a room where you have a bed or lounge,” said Dr. Bates calmly.

“Up this way!” said Alma, going forward to the broad stair-way, disregarding the portrait frowning without mercy at this intrusion.

The sick man was carried to his own room, and there Mrs. Walker, who fluttered nervously about him, made him comfortable.

Alma led Dr. Bates out into the upper hall and asked him what this sudden conveyance of her father to his home might mean.

“I don’t like to say just what I think it is, Miss Walker, but the symptoms are not good.

Had dizziness—he was attacked in the hall up in the brick block—and I was summoned, and found him almost unconscious. Don't be immediately alarmed. He will recover so as to be a partial invalid, and, by keeping quiet, can move about the house and be comfortable. He will not be able, though, to do any hard work, and he must be particular about his diet, avoiding excitement. He may live years, and yet he might—not. Now take it as calmly as possible."

"There is no other way," said Alma, trying to be calm.

And yet all the time she felt a heavy burden coming down toward her, a load out of the stormy sky, broadening, lowering, dropping nearer and nearer, and she knew it must rest on her shoulders, and she must carry it patiently.

At noon something else happened. Two of the children burst into the house excitedly shouting:

"Mother! Alma!"

"Hush! hush!" said Alma meeting this eager quantity of youthful life, "father is not well."

"He sick abed?" asked Billy.

"He is now sitting in his chair," replied Alma.

The children did not seem to think they needed to worry about an invalid only sick enough to occupy a chair and not to be in bed. Alma was moving away when Ted said:

"You—don't—don't want to hear about the *Andromeda*, I suppose?"

Alma turned swiftly:

"The *Andromeda*? What do you mean? She is not wrecked?"

Alma seemed to have become just two dark eyes staring out of a face white as a snow-drift.

"Wrecked? Because a vessel's heard from that's no sign she's wrecked! They were talking about it at my school—the scholars were and the teacher—and she's been spoken to."

"Who? The teacher?"

"No, the *Andromeda*, Alma, the *Andromeda* what Bob went in, and the Willoughbys have got news; and, Alma, where are our letters?"

"Did you ask at the post-office when you came by?"

"Yes, and the post-master said he didn't

know about letters from the *Andromeda*. Cross old budget!"

"O, well, we shall get them when they come. Well, what did the Willoughbys hear?"

"She—she's been spoken—to—and—"

"Well, do speak! Are they all well?"

"I guess so. You mean the Willoughbys?"

"No, no, but Bob and R—Ra—Squire Winthrop's—grandson or—or relative?"

"O, yes. I think so; but, Alma—"

Ted had been speaking in an absent-minded way, looking about him as if to see who might be listening, and then he stepped slowly, reluctantly, up to Alma and said in a hollow, frightened tone of voice:

"Alma, do—do you believe it about Bob?"

"Believe what? Tell me quick, Ted! I can't seem to get any thing out of you."

If Alma was impatient, let it be remembered that she had borne much that day, and she now felt instinctively that the shadow of another trouble was coming.

"Why, one of the boys came up to me and sort of sneered and guessed if his brother went to sea, guessed his brother wouldn't steal—and—"

“Why, Ted!” shrieked Alma, and so, down upon the poor girl’s shoulders another great burden descended.

It seemed to be a part of the wild, winter-like day, a part of the storm that broke in all its fury the subsequent night, the wind howling along the deserted street, the rain splashing somberly from the eaves, and the elms contending with one another more savagely than ever.

Alma did not retire early that night. Her father was very comfortable but weak, and indisposed to say any thing. The excitement had not been kindly to Mrs. Walker’s nerves, and one of her awful headaches must be nursed by Alma.

At last the old Walkers and the young Walkers all were asleep, and Alma went round the house to see if doors were locked and windows were secured. She was passing through the big lower hall, lamp in hand, and gave one glance at the portrait. She had grown into the habit of doing it—the face had a sort of attraction for her. That unknown Winthrop—if such—was no more affable and placable than before.

“What is that?” asked Alma, noticing a

piece of paper on the floor directly under the portrait.

It was a tattered, yellow bit, and as Alma picked it up she noticed that its edges were broken, very much like an old person whose faculties have been invaded by years, and rents are made here and there. She lifted the portrait—how it seemed to scowl!—and saw another bit of paper clinging to the frame, but a blank. She took both bits into the back-parlor, now a school-room by day and a refuge-room by night. Sitting down she joined these fragments, and then she held this yellow, tattered slip up to the light, and read on it these faded words: “John Bevan.”

“Now all of this must have fallen from the back of the portrait,” concluded Alma, “tucked away in the frame. I wonder if it is the man’s name! I will ask Squire Winthrop sometime. To keep it safe, I will put it in my bureau drawer.”

She forgot to inquire of Squire Winthrop what the name might mean, and there in the secret dusk of that drawer was destined to remain unnoticed a very important bit of testimony, sure, however, to be needed sometime.

Would it ever, though, be taken out of its hiding-place?

Alma sat alone while others were sleeping, while the storm was driving and howling about the house, while the rain knocked rudely upon the panes as if for admittance. Two burdens in one day! There was her father's sickness, involving the loss of work that had secured the family this comfortable old home, and there was the story about Bob—said to be a thief, and away off somewhere on the dark sea.

“I can't believe it of Bob,” she asserted.

Then she had a question: Why should all this come upon the family, upon her mother, upon Alma? Were not the burdens large enough before? Did not God know what was coming? Could he not have prevented it? Why did he let it happen? Was not God interested? And to Alma, sitting in the silent back-parlor that night, something seemed to say that God was heavenly Father still, that he was interested, that it was his burden, that— She stopped questioning. If all this was a burden her heavenly Father was interested in, she would carry it with him and in his strength, and would try to bring good out of it even as

he purposed, and now she would go to sleep on the pillow of that thought. She took up her lamp, went into the hall, and climbed the broad old stairway. She did not stop to see if John Bevan was looking at her. She did not think of him.

CHAPTER XI.

A BREAK IN THE CLOUD.

SARDINIUS WALKER soon was walking about the house again, pale, feeble, reminded by the doctor that he must be "careful," and living as it were under the sword of Damocles. He, we remember, was the courtier and flatterer who thought his royal master, Dionysius, ruler of Syracuse, was an exceedingly fortunate and happy man, having a throne under him. Dionysius invited him to a feast abounding in the equipments and viands of royalty. In the midst of all this show Damocles looked up and saw a startling sight—that of a sharp-edged sword hanging above his head by a single horse-hair! The subject's views of royalty were very seriously affected. It was in the shadow of a very grave and threatening fate that Sardinus Walker now lived.

One winter day, when a warm, southerly rain made the out-door atmosphere soft and mild, he thought he would like to venture out on the

street; but the walking was very bad, and he knew he must stay in-doors.

"Why, father," remarked Alma, who somehow was the one to see what was possible, "you might put on your overcoat and go up garret and walk there for exercise."

"So I could," said her father. "I haven't been up for some time. If it wasn't for the mist I might look out of the window and see if the *Andromeda* was anywhere near port."

This playful humor Alma was glad to see.

"He doesn't know what those Willoughbys have been reporting round about poor Bob," thought Alma. "Don't I wish the *Andromeda* would come home soon!"

She quickly heard her father's step on the stairs leading to the garret door. Then at intervals she heard a dull, heavy sound higher up, and knew that her father was exercising in the garret.

"This is good!" he said, walking up and down the bare floor of old brown boards. "I like this. I believe I am good for something yet."

He went to the window and looked seaward, but he could not penetrate the wall of gray mist

thrown up there. Then he turned and walked back toward a window looking down into the yard and garden. All the while the rain beat on the roof an accompanying tune by which the invalid could march. As he walked, he looked up at the rafters, from which hung bundles of spearmint, thoroughwort, and pennyroyal, gathered up by Alma and Mary Haviland in the pastures beyond the town. Then he glanced at a pile of old furniture left there by Squire Winthrop years ago, and among the relics was a box. The lid was off, and naturally he glanced at the contents.

“Books!” he said.

He pulled the box forward carefully, remembering the sword of Damocles, it would seem, and, bringing the books into the fuller light of the back window, examined them.

“An old arithmetic!” he exclaimed. “Geography! Classical dictionary!”

This last he handled with delight, remembering his studies at a certain academy.

“But what is this?” he asked. “Genealogy of the Winthrop family! Must be interesting. Somebody has made additions on the margin; notes written there by some one. I wonder if

Squire Winthrop remembers this book is here. Guess I will take it down and show it to the folks. Quite a find!"

He replaced the other books in the box and came down the garret stairway, wrapped in his overcoat, carrying the genealogy in his hand. There at the foot of the dark stairs, suddenly appearing like a beautiful star amid the shadows, was Alma's bright, pure face.

"Got something interesting?" she asked in her animated, cheerful way. "That is good, father. Come down stairs and enjoy it."

"I will, Alma. I wanted to show it to you and mother. Something very interesting, I think."

"Do come, then, where mother and I are. I have no school to-day, and I am with mother in the shop. We are all alone. Dear me! Only dueks will come out in this rain, so we sha'n't be interrupted one bit. Won't we have a nice time!"

She took her father by the arm, looking up into his face with such trust and affection that it went to the poor invalid's heart, and he murmured,

"You are a real good girl, Alma."

“Only when I have you to tell me so. It is all a make-believe on my part, you know. Now you see how comfortable we are, mother and I—”

It was cozy in the little shop to which the cottons and calicoes, ribbons and yarns, mittens and scarfs, gave a look of comfort and warmth, and this was increased by the open fire of coal in a little grate. Mrs. Walker was sewing by a window. Her face was the only uncomfortable-looking object in the room, but it brightened when she saw her husband's eager interest and Alma's smiles.

“There, mother,” said Mr. Walker, sitting down in a rocking-chair Alma brought out of the sitting-room, “I found something up garret that I know will interest you. It is an old genealogy of the Winthrops.”

“You don't say, Sardinius!”

“Tucked away, nother, in an old box upstairs. See! Got notes in it!”

As he turned over the pages for his wife's inspection she said :

“May find something here about the Winslows; and it is excellent blood, and your great—let me see—want to have it exact—your great—

grandmother was a Winslow, Alma. Yes, we have real good blood."

"Good as the Winthrops?"

"Why, yes, of course, and what is more, our family—the Winslows—married into the Winthrops, you know. May never do it again, but—"

Here Alma turned and looked out of the window.

"But they have done it once. May be the old genealogy will tell about it."

"It will if it is good for any thing," remarked Mr. Walker. "I will find out, Winthrop, if you are an Alma! Ha-ha! Alma, I will find out, I mean, if you are a Winthrop. I have heard it said that we have Winthrop blood in us."

All three laughed. In the midst of the rain it was really pleasant to hear the three laughing, especially when one of the three sat under the sword of Damocles; when, too, out in the hall was a picture that scowled at Alma and asserted that she did not belong there in that Winthrop house. The three in the shop laughed again. In the midst of the merriment, who was it, tall, stately, stooping a little to-day, that came up the

door-steps? Who said only ducks would come out in the rain? Was this a duck?"

"Hush! It is Squire Winthrop!" said Alma. While they were wondering whether it was as a customer or a caller that he appeared, the squire answered this question by coming into the shop.

"O!" he said. "You all here? It does my eyesight good to see you all so happy. Mr. Walker, you are gaining, really. And Alma, and Mrs. Walker, you both look well. I just stepped in—your Aunt Mary wanted a skein of yarn, and I said I would get it for her."

The squire had a way of talking that was as easy if not as vivacious as Alma's. There was always, however, an accompaniment of dignity. He never seemed to forget that he was a Winthrop. It was a fact worth remembering. The duck, though, who had ventured out to make this purchase, had something in mind besides a skein of yarn for "your Aunt Mary."

He had been considering the situation of the Walkers, and what they would do, now that Mr. Walker could do nothing.

"I want to help that Alma," he had silently remarked to Squire Winthrop, "for she is mak-

ing a brave struggle. I wish she was my daughter. Couldn't I fix this matter then! As it is, what can be done? I will drop round and see them."

Not only "yarn," but the future was in his mind when he made his appearance.

"Squire," now observed Mr. Walker, pulling from the rear of his coat-skirts the genealogy which he had timidly secreted when the squire came into the room, "I found this up garret. No objection to our looking at it?"

"O, no; look all you please. Indeed! The old Winthrop genealogy! I didn't know a copy was up in the attic. You see, I have one at home. Ah, I had forgotten about these notes on the margin, and so on! They are very valuable. I have intended some time to give them to the printer and let him preserve them in more durable form. Why, I am really very glad to see this."

"Those notes, Squire? They are pretty old, and I should say the sooner printed the better."

"See here, Sardinius! I have it now, I have it now!"

The squire spoke triumphantly, for he saw the solution of the problem that had perplexed him.

“I want to make you an offer, if your health will permit. Just take off in a clear, neat hand all these notes made on the margin anywhere. Write them out fully, and I will tell you how. Take time for it. I want to have all these notes printed some time—made into an appendix—and then they can be easily kept. You can favor yourself all you please, and work when you feel like it and drop it when weary. I don’t doubt but that you will earn enough to pay for your rent for a year to come.”

What? All that compensation for a task that would not keep a good copyist at work a month! Did Alma hear aright? Did her father and mother hear?

“Isn’t the squire good!” was the silent language of six happy eyes. When the squire had gone, three tongues were very busy sounding his praises. Sardinus Walker had sometimes doubted if the world had given him a fair chance. If the world did feel penitent and disposed to rectify its mistake, the late stroke of sickness threatened to take away the world’s opportunity. It was all right now. He was Squire Winthrop’s amanuensis. He was also a genealogist. He would have an opportunity as a scholar to avail

himself of the resources of knowledge accumulated in that famous academy course of his youth. How it must gratify Alma, he thought, as, clad in a dressing-gown that somehow he always fancied had a scholastic air, he bent over the dusty pages of that genealogy. If Mater, the other twin-child, were only living to witness her father's occupancy of his rightful place! It comforted him to think the dear child did look down from the other life and see his present occupation.

There was another lift on Alma's burdens the very next morning. Alma had hardly started the kitchen fire when there was a hurried, eager knock at the door. She opened it, and there stood Mary Haviland, her faded eyes sharply flashing, her gray hair escaping from her bonnet and fluttering in the wind.

"He says—it—has—not—been proved—and—I think you ought to know—it," exclaimed Mary, as Alma opened the door.

"Come in, come in!" said Alma. "Why, Mary, what sends you out so early? Come in and warm yourself by the stove!"

"O, I ain't cold! Well, it hasn't been proved, no, no!"

“What hasn’t been proved?”

“We had a letter from Horace last night, and—”

“Horace?”

“Yes, yes! Just think! A letter from Horace, and it only got here last night. Been miscarried! So the post-office folks tell me. Now, did—did you ever hear of such things? It got here last night. And—and what do you think Horace said?”

Here Mary dropped her voice to a whisper in communicating the important news.

“You know those Willoughbys said Bob stole, and Horace says it hasn’t been proved! There for ye! Hasn’t been proved! Now, you can stay your soul on that! But I must go.”

Alma was in a kind of painful daze. The subject of any possible theft by Bob was like the sting of a thorn in her side, but when she saw this faithful though weak-minded ally turning toward the door, she recovered herself, and murmured:

“I thank you ever so much, Mary.”

“I thought it would help you when you come to turn it over, dear.”

Turning it over subsequently, Alma was

helped by it. Bob in his letter had said nothing about any charges of theft. Aunt Mary had showed Alma the letter Ralph had sent, but this said nothing about any theft by Bob. Now came Horace's assurance that the charge had not been proved. It was like a breaking cloud at night, revealing in the rift a star.

"Thank God," said Alma devoutly, gratefully. "He is lifting on my burden."

Yes, underneath all our trials, burdens, cares, are the everlasting arms.

Alma's father had not been allowed to know of any charge against Bob.

"It will do him no good," reasoned Alma and her mother. "Then it may do him a lot of hurt, as he has had that ill turn."

Mr. Walker thought of Bob as the smartest sailor, probably, on board the *Andromeda*; every body liking him, his good name without a spot, his future assured as one of honor. But what was Bob doing to win a good record as a whaleman? Borrow the wings of an albatross and fly to the Pacific.

CHAPTER XII.

THERE SHE BLOWS!

“THERE she blows!” was the sharp, shrill cry echoing above the *Andromeda* one day.

Bob at the time was in the galley with 'Rastus the cook. It was a snug place of shelter. Besides the stove, a bulky affair and securely fastened to the deck, there were rows of tin-ware, a table, a small heap of fuel. 'Rastus was “gittin' up a big Johnny cake fur de crew,” so he had told Bob. One big pan for the dough was on the stove; a second stood on the floor, leaning against the corner of the stove. 'Rastus was “spinning a yarn.” “There she blows!” came that cry. The thread of 'Rastus's yarn was abruptly severed, cut by that sharp cry in a place of exceeding interest to Bob. He wanted to find out if 'Rastus knew all the colored people in Oldburyport, and if he possibly knew such a young mulatto as that one in Steve's company the first time Bob ever met Steve. Bob had been listen-

ing to 'Rastus, and, interrupting, was about to describe that mulatto when there echoed overhead the good news, "There she blows!" The galley was instantly in a state of intense excitement. 'Rastus dropped the dish in which he was mixing and stirring his dough, but clung to his big iron spoon and started for the door of the galley. Bob was ahead of him, but hit with his foot the pan resting against the stove, and, stumbling over it, pitched against the door of the galley. 'Rastus arrived at the door in almost as good time as Bob, and in their effort to get out, two at a time, 'Rastus plastered up Bob's right eye with a lump of dough whirled out of the spoon still in the cook's hand. Such a matter as a lump of dough in one's eye is only a trifle compared with a big whale in the sea, and it was not allowed to interfere with Bob's persistent progress. Scouring out his eye with his handkerchief, Bob tumbled on the deck. 'Rastus landed by his side, his legs as well as his spoon flourished in the air, while his eyes were frantically turned toward the source of that outcry in the rigging.

"There she blows!" came the warning a second time.

It was Horace Haviland up in the foretop-gallant cross-trees, doing duty as look-out—a very important piece of service in a whale-ship.

“Where away?” rang out Captain Granby’s eager voice.

“Two points off lee bow! Three miles off, and sperm whale.”

He had no sooner said this than Horace shouted, “There goes flukes!”

This meant that the monster, who had come up possibly to see and devour the maid, *Andromeda*, had gone down into the sea again. This subject was not to be dropped here, even if the whale had disappeared. The excitement in the galley was an illustration of the state of mind in which all the crew were. There were those off duty who were lounging and sleeping down in the fore-castle, but they all scrambled on deck, and rushed for the rigging, every eye eagerly strained to see every thing possible.

“We will find out about that feller!” announced the captain, and the boats were cleared for lowering. The driving *Andromeda* was cautiously maneuvered to meet each emergency.

“Stand by to lower!” thundered the captain, and splashing down into the cool Pacific went

the boats. The whale was now anxiously desired by the crew to appear again, and finally consented.

“There she blows!” was the ringing cry aloft, echoed by many voices below. The whale was much nearer. The white foam of the spout curved above the lonely waters. Such a fountain-like play seemed a very insignificant matter, but it started up those boat-crews as if a bomb had exploded under their feet. There were three boats pushing off. Each had a crew of six men. There were four oarsmen to a boat, also a harpooner and boat steerer. Bob and Ralph each pulled an oar under Roaring Ben, while Horace Haviland was the harpooner. At various times, when the sea was calm and the *Andromeda* loitering in its course, a spare spar would be dropped overboard and towed astern. The spar was supposed to be a whale. The boats would be lowered and the crews exercised duly in whaling. They were drilled in “pullin’ in chase,” and in whatever was meant by those mysteries, “starnin’,” or “goin’ on,” or “pullin’ two oars starn three.” There would be a turbulent swash of foam around that spar, but it would always come unharmed out of the tumult. At

various times, when the voyagers were sailing down the Atlantic, the boats had been lowered for real whales, but Bob's boat was never the one lucky enough to capture a monster. Chagrined on account of this ill-success, Bob's mates were specially anxious, now that they were on the whaling grounds of the Pacific, to strike and secure a whale soon as possible.

"Now, boys," said Roaring Ben, "all-ready! There, that is it! Now, go it! Stiddy, stiddy!"

As the boatmen bent forward to dip their oars Roaring Ben would bend also, then falling back for the long, hard pull. Through the swelling sea shot the boat, Roaring Ben every minute or two interjecting some word of encouragement: "Boys, you are gainin' on 'em!" "T'other boats are fallin' astarn!" "That critter is blowin' agin!" "Stiddy! We'll have an iron in him sartin sure!" "Eyes out, Horace! Have your iron out!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" replied the harpooner, standing in the bow of the boat, his hand on the sharp iron. Before him rose from the sea the square, bulky head of the whale, dark and stupid and stubborn, the outlines contrasting strongly with

the pools of white foam that frothed about this big creature of the deep. Roaring Ben's crew came on gently as possible. Whalers know how to muffle their oars so that the strong, energetic strokes shall not excite his black majesty carelessly sporting in the sea.

"Ready, Horace!" muttered Roaring Ben.

The harpooner gave a nod impatiently, as if signifying by it that of course he was ready, and did not the mate understand that? His harpoons—barbed weapons of iron, the edges keen and bright—were close at hand. There were the lances, each in good cutting order. Nowadays, whalers resort also to harpoon-guns and bomb-lances. In Roaring Ben's boat were three hundred fathoms of hemp-line carefully coiled away. There were hatchet and knife that might be serviceable in cutting the line. This was not the only apparatus in the boat. The whalers must have their compass, for might they not be separated from their beloved vessel? Then they must take water-keg, lantern, candles, fluke-spade, boat-hook, dragging-float. That sporting whale not far away might prove to be a dangerous creature, and in the duel between boat and fish some of the crew might be hurt

as well as the fish. There must be bandages in readiness for any such emergency as a wound. A "waif-flag," mounted on a pole, might be helpful.

Roaring Ben's whale was now nearer than ever. The other boats were still "astarn." As his crew with muffled oars steadily made headway, the mate plied his stimulating remarks.

"Now, boys, give it to 'em! Now, stiddy, stiddy, stiddy! Spring to it! Spring, boys! O, a ship to every man that wins! Spring to it! Hun-now! There!"

As the crew rowed, Roaring Ben steered. His apparatus was a steering-oar over twenty feet long thrust out through a so-called grommet on the stern-post. As if strong hooks of steel his brown hands gripped that oar, while his eyes glared sharp and wild under the eaves of shaggy hair. He saw only that whale.

"There goes flukes!" said Ben, in a softened but excited tone. "Now look out!"

The whale had gone. Gone where? When he came up where would he appear?

Ralph trembled.

"What if that creature should know no better

than to come up under this very boat, and, say, bump his head against my feet!"

Bob did not have any thoughts. He only saw Ben's face, and his soul was thrilled with the excitement of the chase and the hope of capture. He just gripped his oar in silence, for not a man spoke save as the steerer gave his orders in low, hushed tones.

"Pull for dear life!" Roaring Ben was saying. "Spring all! 'Most there! Jest hear him spout! Ain't that music? There he is! Pull!"

In silence every man pulled as if it were to save himself from a funeral. Bob turned his head an instant and saw the huge dark creature projecting his back from the uneasy water. Roaring Ben had risen that he might more easily work his long steering-oar. Horace, also, was standing in the bow of the boat, the sharp-pointed iron in his hand, one moment looking at the big bulk every oar-sweep nearer to him, and then glancing down to see if the line attached to his iron was falling into the tub clear and disentangled. Carelessly, dignifiedly spouting, the king of the sea still lay stretched out upon the sea.

“Now, now, give it to him!” half whispered the mate to Horace.

Whizz—z! went the iron, its keen point suggesting suddenly to the king that somebody meant to disturb his repose.

“Another!” cried the mate.

Horace was handling his second iron, and it followed the first in speedy succession, making another pointed and disagreeable suggestion to his majesty.

“Starn all!” Roaring Ben was now shouting. “Starn, I tell ye!”

The boat was quickly backed to a position beyond the reach of the whale if he should turn and show fight. There was no such disposition in the startled creature. He had felt the prick of a sharp spur that started him off in a mad, violent shoot, and away he rushed, the line whirling out of the tub so fast that the wooden rail of the boat smoked with the heat of the intense friction. Down, down sank the leviathan, as if to smother his trouble and the boat also in the depths of the ocean. Bob had sunk a fishing-line oftentimes in the river at home, but he had never known any excitement like this. All that could be seen was just that strong hemp-line

going down into the ocean, and that something was on the end of the line the movement of the boat readily proved. What a big, unseen mystery was towing them over the Pacific! Would it come up again, this ocean-mystery? Would the line hold? What if it broke? When might the whale be expected? Suddenly, not far away, rose out of the foaming water a huge hump, and the next moment there was the sound of a hoarse blowing. The king had arrived again.

“There she blows!” reported the mate, panting with excitement.

The whale had consumed his stock of air, and had come up to breathe.

“Now spring for it, boys! Quick, Horace! Don’t sojer, boys! Quick!” urged Roaring Ben.

Horace was as prompt as the mate. He drove into the whale a lance, following it up with a second and a third. There was no escape now for the whale. With his immense flukes he threshed the water as if this were the wretch daring to interfere with his peace. The heavy blows echoed over the sea.

“Starn all!” shouted the mate.

The boat was backed out of the raging whirlpool, whose furious center was that wounded fish-king. He would still fight on.

The boatmen rested on their oars and watched from a safe distance the contortions of their booty. These were less and less violent. The huge flukes could not be lifted so easily, flapping lower, lower. The breathing was more and more suppressed. The body turned more and more laboriously, and at last there was a motionless carcass stretched out on the surface of the sea. The king was dead. Across the waters echoed the hurrah of the victorious, happy whalemén. The other boats that had started out in this hunt had been diverted toward several breathing, blowing monsters of the sea, but, failing to make a capture, they rowed up to Roaring Ben's crew, and assisted in the towing of the whale to the ship. It was not a lengthy effort, for the *Andromeda* met them and the whale was made fast to the ship's chains. *Andromeda* was victor in this her modern fight with a big sea-prodigy.

"Well, boys!" exclaimed Captain Granby to Bob and Ralph as they came aboard, "how do you feel after the hunt?"

"First-rate," said Ralph.

Bob's answer was characteristic :

“Ready for the next one.”

“He is going to be a whaleman,” added Roaring Ben with pride.

The mission of the *Andromeda* to the great whaling grounds in the far Pacific now began in earnest. From the mast head hung tackle and fall for hoisting, to assist in the so-termed “cutting-in” process to which every captured whale is subjected. Amidships stood the try-works. The whale duly is dissected or “cut up.” All serviceable parts are hoisted out of the sea. In the “blubber-room” is a whale-carver. He cuts up the blubber, and it leaves him for the “mincing-horse.” Here another carving takes place. The fat is finally brought into available size for the try-pots. These are of iron, and are firmly set in brick. Under these hot fires are maintained. Wood is used at first. When the trying-out season has fairly begun the scraps left after boiling down the blubber into oil are sufficient to keep up the fires. The whale does not need after this the services of a wood-chopper, but is so accommodating as to boil his fat at his own expense.

While a whaler by day cruises under sail

wherever her booty may show itself, at sunset sail is taken in. The mainyard is aback. She lies during the night under diminished canvass. The try-works are in operation. The blackish, sooty flames roll up in the furnaces, and as they escape from the flues they light up the deck, the masts, the shrouds, and stays, the scanty sail, and throw a red glare down upon the sea and turn each patch of foam into a rose from the garden at home.

Bob's first whale (did not our sailor-boy have an energetic hand in the capture?) yielded about seventy barrels of oil, snugly stowed away between decks.

CHAPTER XIII.

SOUNDING A MYSTERY.

IT was just before dawn. Ralph was standing in the bows of the *Andromeda*. He was glad to have this opportunity to do nothing but stand and look off. He had been working hard for two hours about the hot furnaces, cramming in the scraps, or busy in passing pieces of blubber to the try-pots. Work was carried on at night as well as by day. The great question was how to get oil, oil, oil. It is true the *Andromeda* did not have her old look of neatness and trimness. Big grease-spots darkened the decks. Somewhere a sail might need patching or the wood-work might show the marks of hard usage. The business of the *Andromeda* was now not to look handsome, but be a successful whaler. The vessel had come too great a distance—from New England to waters stretching down toward New Zealand—to lose this opportunity for an oil-harvest.

Ralph looked very little like Squire Win-

throp's relative in the fashionable cloak that Alma used to admire in church. He was now just a young whaleman, whose clothes were well greased with whale-blubber. Thankful for a short vacation, he was looking off contentedly toward the east, while the dark sea musically stroked and caressed the hull of the *Andromeda*. The sun had not yet thrust his royal face above the horizon, but he was already coquetting with the clouds, which rosily blushed before his glances. The ship was lying almost motionless on the silent, glassy sea.

As Ralph looked up, he saw Steve Wyckham not far from him leaning over the vessel's rail. Seeing Steve, Ralph thought of Bob. He naturally was reminded of the cross-marked dollar. And then, like a disagreeable object rising out of the sea, came up the old mystery; namely, how did that dollar happen to get into Bob's mitten?

"I would like to ask Steve a question," thought Ralph. Then followed his natural shrinking from the obeying of any such impulse. "You ought," said conscience. "You can influence both parties in this unfortunate affair, if any body can."

Steve had been both careful and courteous in his attitude toward Ralph. It was out of regard for his own interests rather than because he cared for Ralph's feelings. He never forgot that Ralph was Squire Winthrop's relative, and might be a very serviceable round to step on as he climbed up the ladder of promotion. Ralph suspected this.

"You have influence," now suggested Ralph's conscience. "You use it."

Ralph was ready after this.

"Good-morning, Wyckham."

"Nice day."

"I hope so."

"Good whale day."

"Yes-s-s."

There was a pause, a little strip of awkward silence between two people who instinctively feel that one has something special to say to the other person.

"O, Wyckham, excuse it, but—" began Ralph.

Steve looked sharply at him, bull-dog like, as if he suspected that some one was going to invade the privacy of his views.

"But you—but I—but you," resumed Ralph,

"know that it would be pleasant to have that matter between you and Bob Walker fixed up."

"I don't know," replied Steve promptly. "I want it fixed up right. There is only one right way to any thing. All that Bob Walker has got to do is to own up."

"But he asserts that he is innocent; that he has no idea how the dollar came in the mitten; and naturally he would not be such a fool as to bring out of its hiding-place, in so public a way, this money, if he put it there. Now, can't you tell when you had it last? Don't be offended."

Steve knew what was best for his interests. He drove from his face as much of the bull-dog look as was possible, and with a smooth, quiet tongue, said:

"I have been thinking it over, and I have concluded that I had it while on board the ship."

"Sure?"

Steve did not like this monosyllabic interrogatory. It was uttered in a tone of doubt. His face clouded. Bull-dog came into Steve's eyes and looked gloomily if not savagely out upon Ralph. Steve was losing control of himself. He forgot that he was addressing Squire Winthrop's relative, and he saw just Ralph Win-

throp, a greasy young whaleman in the bows of the *Andromeda*.

“You—you—doubt me?” growled Steve. “That is what you all think me to be—a liar. It’s no gentleman that insinuates any such thing.”

“O, I mean no offense, Steve. Beg pardon for any appearance of unfairness. People sometimes forget, that is all. I thought—”

“Don’t care what you thought. You all in that pious Sunday afternoon gang are bound to stand by one another.”

The bull-dog wheeled round on his feet and moved off moodily.

“O, Wyckham!” called Ralph.

Steve would hear nothing, but strode gloomily away. Ralph preferred to contemplate the sun, that had now reached the horizon-line and over the wide, solitary waters threw a bridge of gold stretching as far as the *Andromeda*.

“If that bridge reached to Oldburyport,” thought Ralph, “I would like to leave this craft and start for home at once. I would like to get out of this unpleasant trouble. That can’t be, though, and I must stay by the *Andromeda*, and when she gets to Oldburyport I shall get there

too. All right! I am going to have as good a time as possible, and take things as they come along, and stand by Bob through thick and thin. Ah, there he is!"

"Hullo, Ralph!" shouted Bob, with all the resolute cheerfulness possible. "Nice day!"

"Splendid!"

"Any sign of a whale?" Bob asked, turning and glancing up at the motionless figures who were in the rigging on look-out duty.

"Nothing yet, Bob."

The two young men then faced the sun.

It pleased Ralph to see that Bob was in good spirits and pluckily interested in his daily duties. With regard to the present trouble, Bob had Ralph's mind—to make the best of it. Bob had sometimes wondered why this trouble should have come up, not on land, where we may get away from those we dislike, but, of all places, on board a ship! That, though, is one of life's disciplines—to be cornered with a trouble, to be forced to eat, drink, and sleep under the same roof with it. We show our manhood by accepting and enduring such close quarters in a brave, conciliatory spirit, cheerfully bearing the inevitable.

“Grin and bear it!” was Bob’s motto, and Ralph, in his noble loyalty to a friend’s interests, resolved to echo that motto.

The two friends continued to watch the sunrise, occasionally sweeping the horizon with the eye to see if possibly a whale might be in sight.

“Not one blowing anywhere!” muttered Bob.

No whale, but what was the cry echoing down from the men on look-out duty?

A sail!

“Where away?” called out Captain Granby.

“Due west!” was the reply.

Every body on deck had been facing the east, watching the sunrise, and the west had been neglected. Slowly the stranger bore down on the *Andromeda*, and its occupation was declared at once by the great blocks fastened to the mast-head, its try-works amidships, and its numerous boats.

“What ship’s that?” hailed Captain Granby.

“The *Cruiser*, of ———, Captain Boggs, fifteen months out, eight hundred barrels of oil.”

Captain Granby in turn gave the name, port, time out, of the craft he commanded.

“Come to,” added Captain Granby, “and I’ll send a boat on board!”

Bob was one of Captain Granby’s crew. A rough, hearty seaman, calling himself “Skipper John Mann,” received the visitors from the *Andromeda* and took Captain Granby into his cabin. The other visitors wandered about the deck, talking with the crew, peeping into the try-works, or taking a look inside the fore-castle. Bob, remembering his fondness for a cook’s galley, put his head within the galley-door and sang out, “How d’ do?”

“Walk in! Don’t be bashful, honey!” was the ready welcome given by one of the colored race. But who was it Bob saw standing before the stove, uncertain whether to speak and welcome Bob, or to wait until he was addressed? A great ocean, where humanity is almost as scarce as fresh water, will make two strangers very social. It was a young mulatto. He and Bob were quickly nodding to one another, smiling like old acquaintances, and then Bob began to ask himself whether this young mulatto might not be an old acquaintance actually.

“Where have I seen that fellow before?” asked Bob. He busily reflected awhile and

then he declared, "I must have seen him somewhere on land!"

The conviction strengthened with Bob that the two had met before on land.

"Haven't I seen you before?" asked Bob—"somewhere in—"

"Don't believe you hab. Neber seen you afore."

If he had ever met Bob, he certainly had not seen this kind of a Bob, bronzed by sun and wind, under a rough sou'-wester, in the greasy clothes of the "trying-out" season. If Bob had ever met this young man, where it possibly could have been Bob was at a loss to say. His mind began to search through the past. At first it was like trying with a fifty-foot line to sound a basin reputed to be a hundred feet deep. There was no touching bottom.

"Can't—can't—can't seem to get hold of it," asserted Bob, staring at the young mulatto, but seeing only a grinning face that could not give the least help.

"O!" he exclaimed, "I have it! I saw you in Oldburyport."

"What?" said the young man, as much mystified as ever.

"Call him Jim Solus," suggested the black cook to Bob. "Dat is his name."

"All right. It is coming to me now," said Bob. "I saw you with Steve Wyekham when you two were lugging a chest down to the wharf. Don't you remember, Jim Solus?"

"He—he—he!" laughed the mulatto. "You dat feller? You in—"

"In these old clothes? Greased up and browned up, you going to say? The very one, Jim Solus. How are you?"

The two advanced and shook hands as if brothers.

"He sabe me from a right smart lickin'," explained Jim Solus to the cook. "I remember dat Stebe; not a giant, but he know how to use his fists."

"Well, now, you remember one other thing," said Bob, wishing to improve his opportunity. "Did you see Steve handling any money?"

"Any money? He frew it roun' right an' lef'. Didn' know, you see," Jim Solus explained to the cook, "didn' know much as one do sometime."

"Who didn' know? You, honey? You los' yer senses?"

“He—he! No, dat Stebe. I jined de pledge.”

“Well,” said Bob, feeling that time was precious, and anxious to improve his opportunity, “I will tell you the whole story, and what I am driving at you will see. I found in a pair of mittens a dollar marked with a cross on one side and S. W. W. on the other. When I was taking my mittens out of the chest, that was the time I found it. Funny! And if the dollar didn’t roll over toward Steve, as if knowing it was lost and trying to find him! It was as much of a surprise to me as any body. Now he, Steve, claims that I stole the money from him and tucked it in that mitten. Now—I—don’t know as you can help me, but did you see him with a piece of money like a keepsake or a—”

“I remember. O, I hab seen it wid him a long time. He and me sailed togeder two voyages. I know him all ober, and he had dat money—had it—”

He hesitated. He was feeling away back in the shadows of the past for some evidence on this point.

“He had it in Oldburyport, an’ los’ de money—let me tink! He los’ dat money, he los’ it

dar. We went into a man's shop—he sole goods for sailors—”

“Habermann?”

“Don' know his name. Sort ob tall, look important, dark face, wear specs—”

“That's not Habermann,” cried Bob.

No, it never was the genial “Charlie.”

“Did you go into any other store? You see my time may be up, and cap'n go any moment to our ship. We have got to be quick.”

Bob had not spoken any too soon. That moment Captain Granby's voice was ringing out:

“Come, boys! All aboard for the *Andromeda*!”

“Quick!” said Bob.

“He went into three more stores to buy suffin, and dar he miss his money, and he came out—mad.”

“Well,” said Bob, puzzled as much as ever, and feeling that the mystery was still a dark one, “which store?”

“All aboard for the *Andromeda*,” was the warning cry.

“Say—say!” exclaimed Bob. “Come over and see us! I dare say the ships may lie by each other—”

He was at the door of the galley.

“Get permission—”

“All aboard—”

“Get leave to come to-day—”

“Where’s my crew?” Captain Granby was shouting.

Bob was now at the ship’s rail.

“And see us—”

He was going down the *Cruiser’s* side, yet looking up and beckoning.

“I’ll try,” replied Jim Solus, looking down and benevolently grinning.

How many things in this world are desired and almost touch our hands, and then slip forever beyond our reach! If Bob could only have brought Jim Solus and Steve together, it might have obliged the latter to be more restrained in his charges, Bob thought, and then, in his perplexity, he wondered if Jim could help at all.

The captains of the two whalers thought they might keep one another company that day, and Skipper John in that case meant to return Captain Granby’s visit. A breeze sprang up, though, which sent the *Cruiser* rapidly eastward, in which direction she wished to go, and so with a

disappointed heart, Bob saw a rapidly growing space of blue water between the two ships. The *Cruiser* lessened to a speck of white cloud that vanished into the mysterious spaces of the east. The *Andromeda* was not ready to follow.

“Gone!” declared Bob to Ralph.

“Well, Bob, this is certain. Steve told me,” said Ralph, “his money he had with him on board ship; and now here is testimony that he lost his money in Oldburyport.”

Naturally, one would infer that Steve would have been led by this testimony to be more moderate in his charges against Bob, and Ralph told him what Jim Solus said. Steve sneered at the value of the testimony.

“Humph! What does that prove, supposing Bob did see somebody—”

“Jim Solus,” suggested Ralph.

“Jim Solus!” was Steve’s scornful remark. “I don’t know any Jim Solus. Supposin’ I did see him—jest for the sake of arguin’, you know—and the money was lost in Oldburyport, how did it get into Bob’s mittens? Found the door open and walked in? Get over that difficulty if you can.”

There was still a difficulty, like the bar at a harbor's mouth, that ought to be taken out of the way, and here, in the suspicion of more than one, Bob's fair reputation was caught and held in suspense, if not seriously damaged.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SHIP MUST BE LIGHTENED.

THE heading of this chapter does not refer to the *Andromeda*, but to that domestic vessel, the Walker family, in Oldburyport, whose financial matters were about to feel the pressure of a storm; when it was inevitable that sacrifices must be made, and very many comforts and conveniences go overboard. It was autumn again. The torch of October had fired the maples, and even dared to attack those big elms for which the old town was famous. Outside the town there were groves of oak where that incendiarism was making assaults less bold, but the oaks were doomed to a sure though slower combustion. All over the country the bright October flames were spreading.

To Alma it was not the color of destruction, but of hope rather. It was a bright, cheerful portal through which she was passing into the winter. That was her feeling, one day, when from a garret window she looked out upon the

bright colors lining the streets and blazing in the gardens.

“Things do look hopeful all round!” she murmured. “Bob will be home in the spring, and then he can face and put to an end the stories about him. Father earned enough money by copying the old genealogy to pay our rent up. He is not earning any thing now, but as his health is no worse I guess he will have a chance to pick up something. The children are doing well at school. Mother’s health is quite good for her, and she likes to keep store. If Squire Winthrop were only well!”

Ah, that was a little cloud at first, the squire’s sickness, but it overspread the sky with a dark pall of disaster. Just how it should bring ruin to the Walker hopes will at once be seen.

Bangs Brothers had allowed Alma and her mother to take goods for their little shop to the extent of the value of a thousand dollars. This stock, fast as sold, could be replenished, but Bangs Brothers said, “Don’t keep more than a thousand dollars’ worth on hand at any time. We shall expect you to pay us as fast as you sell, and the more profit you can make on your goods the better for you; but we must protect our-

selves, of course, and as long as you do not buy your goods right out, and pay only for what you sell, we must keep the right any time to take what goods you have on hand. Of course, we don't think there will be any such emergency, but then there is no telling what may happen."

Bangs Brothers certainly did not expect what really happened. They annexed the above condition to their sale of goods to the Walkers simply as a possible convenience to themselves, not anticipating any trouble—which came, nevertheless. It arrived, not by way of the Walkers, but through one of those sometimes unreasonable, often uncontrollable things, a business panic. People were frightened in every direction. The market was violently agitated. "Old houses" that could not stand the sudden strain of this crisis came tumbling to the ground with a sad crash.

"Mother," said Alma, returning from a business errand one day, "I think they look worried at Bangs Brothers'. I have been there and they seemed to be nervous and hurried—very kind to me, of course, in their manner, but still they seemed worried. And when I talked about having some more goods they were just as pleasant

as ever, but said it might be best to wait till tomorrow, and they might sell all right then. I could not understand, but I am afraid something is going to happen. However, we will come out all right."

"All right? All wrong, I should say!" exclaimed Mrs. Walker, who did not possess Alma's sanguine temperament. Like Alma, she had dark eyes, but they seemed more like caves full of gloomy shadows. Mrs. Walker was one of the kind always expecting a storm, even in the midst of fair weather of the most brilliant kind. In a characteristic way she now added: "But, there, I knew something would turn out bad."

It turned out the next day—the failure of Bangs Brothers. All their goods were assigned to a third party, for the benefit of creditors, and these goods were to be sold at once. Alma heard this through Charlie Habermann at his store. He did not know he was reading a death-warrant to the Walkers' business hopes. Alma returned home, and was just doing up a yard of ribbon for a customer, when Mr. Porter, head-clerk of Bangs Brothers, called.

"Trouble!" Alma said to herself, the moment she saw the man. He had never been in the

little shop before, and she knew that he called now on some unusual errand, and to say something about the great failure.

“A pleasant little corner!” he said the moment Alma’s customer had gone. “Really,” he said, looking round, “I did not know you were so pleasantly located. Seems too bad to interrupt you—”

Alma did not jump, or give a little scream. She only looked at the head-clerk very directly and regretfully, and that made it harder for him to proceed. He stammered out a continuation of his speech:

“B-b-but I am afraid-d-d I shall have to take your goods. You know you have had them, as it were, on commission, to sell and make what you could-d-d. We kept the right t-t-to take the goods any time.”

“And they must be taken now, I suppose, sir?”

He lowered his eyes before her searching look.

“Yes, that is it; or as soon as they can be packed. All our goods are included in the assignment we make, and these, of course, go with them. I am sorry.”

“Perhaps Squire Winthrop—”

“Could help you? I wish he were in a condition to give aid, for then I know we should get help. We have found out that his doctor keeps all exciting subjects away from him, and the squire attends as little to business as when he was a baby.”

“I see. Well?”

She looked at him and tried to smile.

“Going to make the best of it, Miss Walker? That is the better philosophy, we think, over at the store.”

“And—religion,” Alma could not help saying.

“Don’t know about that, Miss Walker, but I I know we have got to take things as they come.”

Mr. Porter did not bear a reputation for any interest in religion. He lived apparently a life as separate from all spirituality as the life of a vegetable.

“We are very thankful to you people at the store for allowing us to have the goods as long as we have had them. We can take some comfort in that, Mr. Porter.”

“Don’t know about that either, Miss Walker. It does not make me happy in the midst of rainy weather to-day because it did not rain yes-

terday. But there," he said, with an apologetic tone, "I ought not to be bothering you this way. The long and the short of it is, we must all try to make the best of things. Sorry, sorry! If you will be ready to pack the goods, I can send you over some boxes any time."

"We will be ready, and we thank you all. We will square up for every thing we owe. We are really sorry for Bangs Brothers."

Mr. Porter went out of the old house saying, "That girl would take the electricity out of a stroke of lightning. Wish I could feel as she does—and talk so, too, even if I did not really believe so."

The head-clerk had been venting his feelings in almost numberless rounds of oaths since the hour the failure was known to be inevitable.

Brave Alma! When alone—she was only a girl after all—she leaned her head forward on the counter and cried.

"That does me good!" she said. "Now, I'll go to work."

She began at once to take up the ribbon goods and arrange them for packing. Then she gathered up the spools of cotton in their corner. The boxes came from the store of Bangs Broth-

ers promptly, and promised to hold all that the Walkers had on the counter and shelves.

"They look like coffins," said Mrs. Walker with a groan. "I mean these boxes."

"It does seem like a funeral," said Alma, laughing. "No, I won't have it. I am going to think it is the best thing possible. Mother, now see! I can get something to do besides my school, so as to earn some money, and all this will save you a lot of work. You need a vacation."

"Got to take it whether needed or not, Alma," was Mrs. Walker's glum and unappreciative remark. "I wish it would rain."

"Why?"

"O it would seem fit, and have it blow, too—"

"And hail and snow and—"

Both were now laughing. The weather did none of those things. The hours when the daughter and mother were packing were very sunny. Mr. Walker came in, and he tried to help on the exodus, saying what cheerful things he could, driving any needed nails, and lifting as far as his limited stock of strength would allow. Ted and Billy arrived, and, claiming to

be "men," handed the goods to the packers, and ran promptly on any errands. Carrie served as best she could. It was touching to see how anxiously each lent a helping hand.

The room was cleared of its stock of goods, the floor nicely swept, the extemporized counter and shelves moved elsewhere. Then they all gathered in the empty apartment—Alma, her father and mother, Billy, Ted, and Carrie—and they did their best toward saving the hour from any gloom. And it did not rain one drop or blow one gust. All day the sun poured down its blessing, and at its hour for setting took one more golden look at the family, and made it as long and kindly a look through the window as possible.

"Not a bit of a funeral, mother," whispered Alma.

The picture in the entry, though, looked gloomier than ever, as if to say,

"This young person is doing very wrong in trying to be cheerful. She will make mischief in the family yet. She has no business here; I have."

"Whoever you are," said Alma, "old scarecrow, you don't frighten one bit."

Now, was the emptying of that front room the lightening of the ship I had in mind?

Not at all, but that lightening soon came.

“What is to be done now?” asked Alma one day, in the midst of a family circle composed of herself, her mother, Ted, Billy, and Carrie.

Her father was up-stairs in his room. He did not feel very well, and he could be heard at intervals feebly coughing. The family conference therefore went on without him. It was just as well, for if he had been present he would have been as much at a loss to know what he, Sardinus Walker, could propose to do in this hour of the family’s extremity, as if on a sand-bank, a hundred miles from the main-land, without a boat, no sail in sight, he were asked how he could get ashore.

Alma took the lead in the conference, for the good reason that there was no other leader. Mrs. Walker complained of a “headache coming on,” and her head had already gone into a thick, wide bandage of black, as if a mourner over the late family catastrophe.

“Now, folks—old folks, young folks—what are we going to do?” asked Alma, and she asked it in such a pleasant way, with such a

bright smile, that it seemed as if she meant, "Now, who is going to a picnic?"

And Ted and Billy and Carrie caught a cheerful sparkle from Alma's beautiful eyes, and their faces lighted up as if the smile accompanied a remark, "We will all go."

"O, dear!" groaned Mrs. Walker.

She did not feel as if a picnic were before them.

"They say," continued Alma, disregarding the cheerful ebullition from her mother, "they say if you want to have money you must save it. You must go without something. Now what can we do without?"

"Don't see how we can do without a thing if we haven't got it in the first place," said Mrs. Walker, in the same encouraging tone of voice as before.

"We shall see," replied Alma, nothing daunted. "Now I had set my heart on having a new cloak. I have been thinking it over, and I can get my old one turned—turn it myself—and it won't cost much to dye it a pretty shade. A new one would have cost me fifteen dollars. To fix the old one will cost me two dollars. Two from fifteen leaves how much, children?"

“Thirteen!” they screamed enthusiastically.

“Only think! Thirteen already! Thirteen dollars good as in the hand! Ted, you get a piece of paper and a pencil—up on the shelf there under the clock—and set the figures down. Thirteen to begin with. Now, who next?”

“Well, if I must,” said a doleful voice under the black bandage—“if I must, I must. I did want a new bunnet. I can make my old one do, and save four dollars on that.”

“No, mother, I have set my heart on that. You must have a new hat,” said Alma. “I can trim it, and in that way it won’t cost you more than a dollar. She must have it, children, mustn’t she?”

“Yes, yes!” was the general shout.

“I heard father say,” remarked Ted, “that he was not going to have a new coat.”

“Poor man! he deserves it; but I suppose if I buy velvet for a new collar, get some nice silk binding for the edges, rebutton the coat, and so on, it won’t cost much to fix up the old one. A new one would cost twenty dollars, and we can fix the old one up for three. Three from twenty will leave how much?”

“Seventeen!” again shouted the children enthusiastically.

“Seventeen and thirteen make how much, Ted? Set it all down.”

“Thirty, Alma!”

“Only think! Thirty dollars already, good as in the hand!”

The children’s eyes snapped as if they really saw thirty bright silver dollars heaped up in Alma’s two hands.

“I was going to buy a pair of boots this winter for three dollars,” said Ted, who had picked up this money running errands during the summer. “Horace Haviland’s brother says he can fix up my old ones good as new for a dollar.”

“Well, that will save two dollars. Thirty-two dollars, in all, that we have saved! The sum is rolling up. I can give up going to the ‘Young Folks’ Lecture Course.’ That would have cost me a dollar and a half. I can take more books out of the public library instead. I can get information that way, same as if I went to lectures. Thirty-three dollars and a half! Now, what else can we throw overboard?”

As this throwing overboard process was continued, the Walker ship, that had been so hard

pressed by storm, began to right itself. It rose up from its humbled posture. Its prow was again pointed toward fair weather seas.

What else could be given up? What thing could go overboard?

“Not having a store, we shall have one fire less. That will save us half a dozen dollars—ten even,” declared Alma. “That will bring the money up to forty-three dollars and a half! How it does count up? Good as so much money in hand!”

What else to go overboard?

“I can give up my Christmas visit,” suggested Carrie, rolling her big eyes up toward Alma.

This meant a trip in the steam-cars to the next town, where Carrie had been invited to spend Christmas at a cousin's. This expenditure would only be ten cents for the fare each way, and it was thought best not to interfere with that.

“There!” said Alma. “I didn't think! Where are my faculties? Not having a store, we shall need one light less in the evening. There will be a saving.”

Other things were recalled that, connected

with the store, had been an occasion of expenditure. All this would be saved. Indeed, the impression gained ground rapidly that the store had been quite an expensive institution. As this fiction did no harm, and brought the family conference much comfort, Alma did not interfere with it.

“O, Alma!” cried Ted, “you left out the saving on mother’s bunnet.”

“So I did! I am getting old and forgetful.”

There was now a going back to pick up omitted sums.

“Could there be a saving in our table expenses?” next suggested Alma.

This brought an uneasy look into the children’s faces. Ted’s had an aspect of horror. Ever since they could recall the fact that they were Walkers, the table had been a place where they did not get all that they wanted. What could be spared possibly, to go as a sacrifice into this yawning deep of economy? However, Alma could think of a few things where the diet might be simplified, she thought, “and yet, children, it be as nutritious.”

The children looked very doubtful, while Mrs. Walker gave a very dismal nod.

So they kept on giving up, throwing overboard, lightening the ship.

“Now, let us look at Ted’s list! We have gone all over the house,” declared Alma laughing; “up into the garret, down into the cellar, back in the shed—”

“Out-doors, too, on the street,” suggested Ted.

“Yes, every-where, and we can save—O, my! A hundred dollars!” declared Alma.

A shout of exultation now went up from the small Walkers. It did seem worth while to lighten the ship. Alma went to sleep very composedly that night, and her rest was as comfortable as Bob’s ever had been on the great deep when, after a hard watch, he would creep, stiff and tired and sleepy, into his bunk, and the *Andromeda* would ride up and down like a cradle, rocking Sailor-boy Bob into a deep, grateful slumber. So Alma slept this night; and, best of all, she felt that her heavenly Father’s hand was on the helm of life’s vessel, guiding it safely over the deep.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW?

THE ship had been lightened. Another question now came up, and a far more difficult one than any discussed in the last chapter. It was this: How keep alive the crew that must run the ship? How get just the necessities of life—such as bread and butter, clothing and shoes for Ted, Billy, and Carrie, also father and mother? Somehow, Alma did not think of herself. She could get along on what they did not need to use; on what they left behind. There must be another conference.

Mr. Walker was absent from this conference also. He kept his room, and could be heard at intervals, as before, still feebly coughing.

“Well, folks,” said Alma, the leader now as at the previous conference, “what can we do toward getting some bread and butter, and so on? I thought we had better talk it over.”

Mrs. Walker did not have a black bandage round her head this morning. It was round her

soul, though, and gloomily she looked out of the window.

“I will do all I can to get more scholars. I have twelve now every morning.” (The school did not keep in the afternoon.) “If I could get three more!”

Alma looked round on Ted, Billy, and Carrie, who had come at different times into her school flock, as if to suggest, “Could you get me any scholars?”

“I’ll tell you what, Alma,” said Ted. “We might each count as two! That would give three more.”

This made the conference laugh, but it did not bring any new scholars.

“Well, I will see what can be done,” said the leader.

“I think I can count on some sewing, you know, Alma,” remarked Mrs. Walker.

With the store had come applications from customers for the services of any body who could do “a little sewing.” Such opportunities for work had been eagerly accepted by Mrs. Walker, Alma assisting. Once the mother had been a dress-maker. This knowledge of the use of the needle had never been lost, and Mrs.

Walker would always make the dresses of Alma and Carrie until, one day, she told Alma that she "guessed Alma, being a big girl, must go to a reg'lar dress-maker."

When the store was opened Alma insisted upon it that her mother should teach her how to "do dress-making," as far as Mrs. Walker understood it. Several times the two had had opportunities to make dresses for little folks, and they had accepted these chances.

"Now, mother," said Alma, "why not put your shingle out, and say, 'Dress-making for misses?' That means me as well as you, for I will help you."

This rather startled the conference.

"Not—not—like Joe Bigler's grandmother?" said Ted.

Joe Bigler was not a favorite with Ted. This is what Joe Bigler one day in school wrote on his slate: "My grandmarm makes dresses. She has a sine, DRESMAKIN DONE HEERE. It is stuck on her house."

Ted thought at the time, "I hope none of my folks will have a sign up like that."

There was a little family pride opposed to this measure. It must go overboard.

“Why,” said Alma, “what is the difference between that and a store? We had a window all filled up with goods. Wasn’t that a sign? We put up with that. Any thing, I say, that is honest.”

This argument settled the matter. When it was the children’s turn to mention any thing they could do toward the support of the family, they were very loyal to the name and interests of Walker. Ted thought he could get some body’s office fire to build. Billy crowed that he would “try.” Carrie only nodded her head, but it was a very zealous nod. It meant something that was very definite in her own mind, but she did not care to speak it out.

Alma felt drawn toward the house of Squire Winthrop, especially to ask if “Aunt Mary” knew of any thing that Alma could possibly do. Aunt Mary, alas! knew of nothing.

“Is the squire better?” asked Alma, in the hall.

“Yes, he is decidedly improved. We keep him very quiet. He doesn’t yet know about the failure of Bangs Brothers,” said Aunt Mary. “Yes, we keep him very quiet.”

Thump, thump, thump!

It was a sound like that of a pounding in a room at the head of the stairs.

“Dear me!” said Aunt Mary. “It is that man, I do believe, that is a-pounding. I left a cane with him, if he wanted any thing. I’ll be right down again.”

“Remember me to him, please.”

Aunt Mary came down quickly.

“Just think, Alma! His hearin’ is dreadful good. He heard your voice, and he wants you to come up. So you must go. Don’t excite him, or say any thing about the failure of Bangs Brothers.”

Squire Winthrop was bolstered up in his bed, looking very pale and thin, but he was convalescent to this extent—that he had “just begun to set up a leetle,” Aunt Mary said. He was a handsome old man, with his soft white hair, his fair complexion, and blue eyes that “carried a smile in them,” Carrie Walker said. The furniture in the room was old-fashioned, but very comfortable, and Aunt Mary saw that every thing was kept in excellent order. There was a soft, thick carpet on the floor, and this was more agreeable to Alma’s feet than the floors at home, almost all of which were bare. Behind a pair

of tall brass andirons, brightly burnished, was a fire of rock maple, and it was very acceptable this chilly autumn day. The squire was very glad to see Alma, and he had a kind word to say about those at home, and that he hoped her father was doing well; and then he said he was glad Bob was coming home in the spring.

“I have been somewhat worried about you all, business has been so affected. For some time I was out of my head, and didn't know any thing and couldn't render any help to any body, and I suppose it was then you gave up your store; and Bangs Brothers, they have stopped too, and—”

“Squire Winthrop!”

It was Aunt Mary. She had a very sharp nose and keen, black eyes. These gave her face an aspect of penetrativeness, as if she were continually making an investigation. Then Ted said that her spectacles made her look “as if she were going right through you.” There was a big store of energy behind that penetrating look, and when Aunt Mary did start to make an investigation she was quite sure to go deep down into a subject. She was a person of many excellent qualities, a notable housekeeper, a good

financier, could hold her tongue and be as reticent as a stone wall, and was very even and cheerful in her temperament. She made a desirable executive for the domestic department of Squire Winthrop, who had been a widower many years. She now closely eyed the squire. She *eared* him, also, eagerly listening when she had said:

“Dear me, Squire Winthrop! How—how did you hear about business matters? Been a-keepin’ ’em from you—”

The squire smiled.

“One day, when you were gone a-shopping, Anastasia brought up the *Globe* that had just arrived, Mrs. Walker.”

Anastasia was the hired girl. She had thoughtlessly brought up the mail. In it was the *Globe*, an ambitious name for the local sheet that gave the news that happened in a small patch of this earthly sphere, a patch known as Oldburyport.

“When it was too late for me to do any thing, the *Globe* told me that the house of Bangs Brothers had failed, and that the Walkers had closed their store. I was very sorry for you. I wonder what Bangs Brothers will do. However, let that go.”

Aunt Mary did not say any thing, but she looked very significantly at Anastasia, who now entered, bringing a big maple-stick for a back log. When she had left, the squire remarked :

“ You see, Aunt Mary, young boys like your patient will do strange things sometimes. I believe I went all through the *Globe*, advertisements and every thing. I was very hungry for news, being a boy, too, you know.”

Aunt Mary now smiled, and prudently said nothing. She once confessed to Alma that she found the Winthrops, especially, did like to have their own way, and it was not best to oppose them.

“ Let me see, Alma,” resumed the squire ; “ you have a school in the morning.”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Well, how would you like in the afternoon to come and read to me ? I know my housekeeper wouldn't like to have me read myself—”

The housekeeper shook her head authoritatively.

“ And you might plan to be here a part of each afternoon, between one and two hours, say, and read me the papers or some book. I will

make the compensation agreeable. Would twenty-five dollars a month be satisfactory compensation?"

Twenty-five? Why, in its most flourishing days, the store had not brought much more than that.

"I—I—should be delighted to do it," said Alma.

And what she uttered with her mouth was not half as expressive as the satisfaction that glowed in her eyes.

"When shall we begin, sir?"

"To-morrow," replied the squire promptly.

Aunt Mary over in her corner had her doubts about the judiciousness of all this "newspaper readin' and book readin'," as she silently expressed herself; but knowing fully the Winthrop willfulness she said nothing, and resolutely bent over her work.

The profits of Alma's new occupation made a very happy family at the Walker home, while the occupation itself was a very agreeable one to Alma.

It was so very comfortable there in the squire's room. As the autumn air grew chillier, the squire's open fire grew bigger. From the tem-

perature without you could tell the size of the fire within. The squire, in his long dressing-gown of gray trimmed with crimson, would occupy one side of the fire, and Alma would sit opposite. I do think it made Aunt Mary a little jealous to see the squire listening so contentedly to that fair young reader, but she wisely sealed up in her soul all captious thoughts. Alma enjoyed any thing like a book. She appreciated, too, the comfortable, tasty surroundings of the squire's home. Then there was an agreeable sense that the squire was taking care of her, and he seemed very much like a father—an ideal father.

Mr. Walker had been to Alma more like a big, well-meaning, but crippled child, that must be taken care of. Ever since she could run about and earn something, she was helping to support the family. She found this necessity a luxury. She rejoiced in the privilege. And yet—and yet—it was pleasant to have a change sometimes and feel that there was some one looking after her, and Squire Winthrop was filling out in part the measure of that idea. So Alma read with much enjoyment, and the squire listened with a satisfaction as great.

At home, Alma's new earnings were extremely acceptable. Still there was room for more, especially when the white flakes were flying, as if trying to make white, feathery wings that would fold nicely and tightly down upon the earth, and keep it warm, which they could not possibly do.

Alma thought of a plan that might be to the Walkers' profit, and she asked the squire's mind about it one day.

"Would you have any objection, Squire Winthrop, to our letting part of our house? There are a few rooms we could spare as well as not," said Alma.

"Suit yourself, Alma. I think I can give your father some writing when he is a little better, and it will offset your rent. Let any rooms you please."

This put canvas wings to that lightened Walker vessel, but they all said :

"If we can get any rent for the squire by letting rooms, we will. We shall feel more independent."

"We had better," said Mrs. Walker, "get a real estate agent to let them for us. We don't seem to know of a tenant."

"Very well, mother," replied Alma.

"And we can give a tenant all the rooms on the left hand side of the hall; can't we, Alma? We can by squeezing ourselves a little," said Mrs. Walker.

Yes, by squeezing they could offer a tenement of five rooms to a small family. They were used to squeezing. It was Carrie who abounded in expedients and ventures, and was now instrumental in securing a tenant. She was on the hunt for opportunities to help along the family one day, when she saw on a bulletin board outside an office door this tempting notice: "Girl Wanted."

Her big eyes took in this announcement with satisfaction.

"Perhaps I can earn something," thought the intrepid little soul, and she ventured into the office.

"What do you want this morning, my little girl?" asked a gray-whiskered man, looking up from a desk.

"Well, what—what do *you* want? It says out there, 'Girl wanted.' I thought—"

The man laughed as he said,

"Well, dear, it is a big girl, a servant-girl for

housework that is wanted. I ought to have been more definite."

"O—h!" exclaimed the disappointed Carrie.

"We have various wants here," said the man kindly, anxious to say something that would divert this disappointed applicant. "We want houses for people and people for houses—"

"O, you let places?"

"Yes, we let houses if any body has them."

"O, we have five rooms to let!"

"Have you? Well, if your folks will tell me about them, may be I can get a tenant."

As the result of this interview, Alma called to see Mr. Drown. He was a stranger in town, and for that reason was anxious to pick up employment, and offered his services to Alma at such low figures that she engaged him to obtain a tenant. He soon sent her a note, saying:

"I have secured a tenant—an old man and an old woman. Very quiet people. No children. Will pay seventy-five dollars. They will come to-morrow, as they are very anxious to move before any more winter storms come. You said the rooms were ready, and I know you would like to have the rent begin as soon as possible."

“He didn’t say who they were,” observed Mr. Walker feebly ; a closely-confined invalid this winter, but hoping soon to handle his pen for the squire. -

“No,” replied Mrs. Walker, “but they will be here in the morning, and can speak for themselves. I think we can trust him—Mr. Drown—to send us good tenants.”

Alma was away, and did not return home till late in the evening, or she would have made inquiries of the real estate agent and obtained information about the expected neighbors.

The next morning, before the breakfast table had been cleared, somebody in the street shouted, “Whoa—a—a ! Whoa, there, I tell ye !”

Billy was out-doors, and heard the teamster. He came rushing into the house.

“Goods have come, and I opened the front door and told the man where to put them,” cried Billy.

Alma went into the hall, and the teamster was there, a chair in each hand.

“Bright and early,” he said.

“Yes, sir. Do you know who these folks are ?”

“No, lady. The real estate man, Drown,

gave me the job, and I axed the folks no questions. They live in a good neighborhood. I told 'em I would see the things were sot round. They are comin', you know."

"But they have never been here. How do they know they will like the place?"

"O, they probably know the reputation of the house. Every body knows it is first-class."

This comforted Alma, to think every body called her home "a first-class house."

In a short time Alma, saw an old lady watching the house. Then this watcher came up to the door and pulled the bell-knob.

"I thought I would follow my things," said the old lady to Alma.

"O, you—you are the one that rented the rooms."

"I am one of them. Mr. Drown told us."

"Well, make yourselves at home, and tell us if we can help you. May I ask your name?"

The old lady gave it at once, but Alma did not catch it distinctly.

"I wont ask her again just now," thought Alma. "She is bothered enough about moving, I know."

Another load and an old man came soon. By

dinner-time the goods had ceased to arrive, and no one of the bright-eyed Walker children had seen the old man or the old woman leave the house. Through the afternoon, sounds of the moving of furniture could be heard by the Walkers.

About dusk Mary Haviland called.

"They've come, haven't they?" Mary, in her eager, excited way, asked of Alma.

"Our new neighbors? Yes, though I don't know who they really are yet. The woman gave her name, but I am getting old, I think, for I didn't understand her. I am going to ask again."

"Then you don't know?"

"Why, no."

"They told me down street at my grocer's."

"Well?"

"Well what, Alma?"

"Well, why don't you tell me?"

"O, they are the Willoughbys."

"The who?"

"Them folks what told the bad news about Bob."

"The very folks?"

"So my grocer says, and he says they don't

probably know you are Bob's folks. They haven't lived here long, and they don't know every thing."

"The Willoughbys!"

"Yes, I believe they had to move right off. House was sold over their heads. Mis' Willoughby, I believe they said, she only wanted to put her feet inside some place, for she was all worried out."

"Indeed!"

"You'll find it jest so," was Mary's last affirmation as she turned away and left Alma's presence. Alma sat alone in the kitchen, into which the night was fast hurrying, darkening every corner and bringing out in vivid contrast the red light of the fire in the stove.

"O, dear, here is a new trouble—the Willoughbys!" thought Alma. "Why do they come? They can't know who we are! O, dear!"

A new storm seemed to threaten the Walker vessel. I said our heavenly Father was at the helm. Would he let go his hand now, and ask Alma to care for herself?

"No," said Alma.

But why should the old trouble come up

again and walk into the house, as it were, before the Walkers' very eyes ?

“I must leave it all with God,” Alma murmured.

And that is where she left it all—in the arms of the heavenly Father. She was thinking upon the subject when she went to sleep. She felt that it would be a relief if Bob were at home and she could tell him this trouble.

“He will be here in the spring,” she murmured.

Would he ? If she could have seen as far as the heart of the South Seas, and watched a drifting boat, she might have seriously doubted whether Bob would ever see home again.

CHAPTER XVI.

ADRIFT.

WHAT was it? A clump of drift-wood, a boat, the carcass of a whale, a fragment of the wreck of a ship, a—what could it be?

Captain Granby, looking off one afternoon from the deck of the *Andromeda*, could not say. Bob, watching the same object, could not say. One moment it would be "drift-wood" in Bob's opinion. Then Captain Granby might say, "I really think it is something else. I do believe somebody is on it, waving something."

Neither eye nor glass would declare what it was. There was very little wind at this time to take the *Andromeda* anywhere, and none at all to carry the *Andromeda* toward this drifting object.

"I—I—wish, cap'n," said Bob, in his eager way, that lock of hair on his forehead curling out prominently, as it seemed to have a strong tendency to do when he was excited, "I wish you would let Ralph and me take a boat and go

off and see what that is. The vessel is not making much of a headway, and you could lie to and pick us up. May be something important there."

"Well-l-l," said the captain. His tone said what the uttered word did not—that he was very doubtful whether it would do any good. Bob had a magnetic eagerness that always influenced Ralph, and he jumped with Bob into the boat when it was lowered.

There was no whale-hunting that day, but work previously had been very pressing. Whale after whale had been captured, the try-works had been in constant service, and the *Andromeda's* load of oil for home was increasing. The crew were tired, and at the time that the boys left the *Andromeda* many of their shipmates were stretched out in the bunks below. A few of the crew witnessed this seemingly insignificant departure.

"Good luck!" cried Horace Haviland. "If that is a wreck of a pirate off there, bring us a pot of gold if you find any was left on board!"

Steve Wyckham, with the sneer that he generally kept on hand nowadays, flung out a

suggestion, "A joke if you chaps didn't get back again!"

"'You chaps' can take care of themselves," Bob informed him, and the boat was pushed off. The great sea was quiet for such a body of water, and yet it showed a long glassy swell, now lifting, now lowering this boat of discovery. The *Andromeda*, with its lazily flapping sails, its tackle and fall at the mast-head, its try-works projecting above the rails, receded every moment, the heads of the men that leaned over the vessel's side dwindling to a row of peas along the rail. On all that stretching waste of water nothing astern could be seen save the *Andromeda*, and ahead was that strange, drifting mass. Between these two objects, one with life aboard, the other seemingly dead, was this boat with the two young men.

"Can you make it out?" asked Ralph, as he saw Bob twisting his head and trying to look round, after an energetic pull.

"Well, Ralph, we are a good deal nearer, and it looks like timber of some kind. I see something beyond it that looks like poles or brooms or trees sticking up. It is very small."

"You do?"

“Yes. Just look!”

They both rested on their oars and looked ahead.

“You are right, Bob. Strange we did not see it from the deck.”

“Cap’n Granby and I both thought we saw something beyond that clump there, and once he said, ‘Bob, seems to me there is an island off there,’ but it was kind of hazy in that direction, and whatever we saw went out of sight. It would have been seen better if it wasn’t for the haze.”

All this time the *Andromeda* was halting on the great sea.

“’Most there to that stuff!” cried Ralph. “Whatever it is, we shall be there soon. One consolation!”

“Soon” at sea has a variety of meanings. It may be a distance of two miles or one mile or five miles; and when a ship is swashing along through the waters at a lively rate, “soon” means a number of good leagues. In this case “soon” meant farther than Ralph supposed. The *Andromeda* still lay almost becalmed on the vast ocean.

“’Most there, Ralph!” cried Bob, now trying

his hand at assuring a companion of a speedy voyage. "I did not know it was so far here. However, we shall soon be all right."

"Soon" in this case also meant more than Bob conjectured. The longest distance, though, has its limit, and the floating mass was reached.

"Piece of a wreck!" said Ralph. "That is all!"

"So it is," replied Bob.

They rowed about the misshapen mass, a relic of a hard fight between a ship and some storm, and tried to discover a clew to its name.

"Looks like a piece of the stern," said Bob.

"Yes," said Ralph, "row ahead. I don't know but what I see some letters."

They had almost circumnavigated the bulky mass when Bob shouted,

"There is a C."

"There is an A," said Ralph.

"Yes," added Bob, "I can make out S and P."

The other letters were under the surface of the water. The boys looked down and saw beneath the green, tremulous surface of the sea two more letters, A and R.

"This unfortunate craft was the *Caspar*, Bob,"

declared Ralph. "The *Caspar* has gone, now, though."

"Let me see if I can't get a relic, Ralph."

Whistling about this melancholy sample of a disaster at sea, Bob noticed that a part of the name was loose.

"O, good! See, Ralph! Here's a little board on which is P in the name, and it has worked loose somehow. I'll rip it off. Here she comes. There, she is mine now. A whole P!"

"Well, we must be going. Sun is working down toward the horizon. Good-bye, *Caspar*, thou lonely, forsaken soul!"

"Good-bye," echoed Bob. "Never will see you again."

And was it, "Good-bye, *Andromeda*?"

Where was that vessel? The boys looked off in surprise. Had that craft become a wreck, and gone down into the sea?

"Where is she, Bob?"

Bob turned round and exultingly shouted,

"There she is!"

He pointed off toward the old whaler, lifting still its canvas above the sea. They had not looked in the right direction; but there she was over in the south-east. How good she looked!

“That shows, Bob, how easy it is to get turned round. We had better put for home.”

“I did hope we might get to that island,” said Bob regretfully.

Ralph knew Bob's love of adventure, and was not disposed to encourage it any further. The sun, too, was lying on the western water, a round hub of gold, out of which shot spokes of flame through the masses of cloud. In an opposite direction, on a sea almost without a ripple save that long, heavy, unbroken swell, rose the *Andromeda*. It was a beautiful sight—that motionless vessel rising up in the symmetry of its rigging, of mast and spar, of rope and canvas. Then the beautiful became the majestic as the eye rested upon the vast, silent sea, changing from a chilling indigo in the east to a wide stretch of crimson in the west. Besides the *Andromeda*, the only visible objects on the sea were the fragment of the unfortunate *Caspar* and that little island.

“Put in, Bob, put in!” said Ralph.

He knew his companion's relish for discovery; that he was inclined to linger not only until the last moment, but the moment after.

“Just one more relic, Ralph.”

“Bob, you are a booby! Come! I am going to row my part of the boat to the ship. You can stay here and tie your part of the boat to the *Caspar*.”

“Ready!” said Bob, pulling on his oar. “I wonder where that *Caspar* is going?”

“Going? Nowhere.”

“No, I think she is drifting.”

“Any thing, I suppose, on the water, is pulled round by currents, but this—”

“No, there is quite a drift to her. A pretty strong current I thought I noticed when we were hanging round the *Caspar*.”

“O, I guess not!”

“I think so.”

“Well, I hope it won't interfere with us.”

“O, probably not! We are good for it. Come, Ralph, sing!”

The boys raised a boating song. It sounded so lonely on that lonely sea. They pulled away, strongly, steadily. The sun had now gone down, but from the agitation of colors in the west that monarch seemed to be making an effort to get up again, flaunting overhead some of his imperial drapery. The boys were looking toward the west, as they rowed away, admiring that last gor-

geous display of the sunset, when Ralph exclaimed,

“Bob, before you turn round, guess how far we are from the *Andromeda*! Half way there?”

“O, yes! more!”

“I’ll guess two fifths,” said Ralph, who was not so sanguine as Bob.

The boys rested on their oars a moment and then looked round. The *Andromeda* was gone!

“Whew-w-w!” exclaimed Bob. “Where is she?”

“That is an interesting question,” said Ralph.

“Easy to ask the question! It will be more interesting to get an answer.”

“O, there it is!” cried Ralph.

He pointed toward a black object towering above the sea.

“You are right!” cried Bob, eager to assent to any thing. “Now, spring for it!”

The boys pulled as they only did on the most exciting kind of a whale hunt, and then looked again.

“I think I see it, Bob, over *there*!”

Ralph pointed toward an indistinct pillar of something rising out of the sea.

“But—but, Ralph, I see something over there at the left.”

There were two uncertain vapory columns, and which was the *Andromeda*?

“We might row sort of between them, Bob, and then we can tell which is the ship.”

“Well-l-l.”

The two boys pulled away violently. Neither expressed the fear that was in his mind—that by the time they had reached a point between those misty somethings, each “something” might be nothing! Neither cared to sing now. Ralph looked very anxious. Bob looked anxious and reckless also. No ship, the sun gone down, a vast unknown sea about them! There were clouds on one section of the horizon. Did this indicate a storm? Both of the boys saw it, but did not care to say any thing about it. They pulled in silence.

But where *was* the *Andromeda*? It was on the sea, and Captain Granby was wondering where the boys were. After they had left, he was busy in the cabin working out an estimate of the financial results of this trip to the

whaling grounds of the South Seas, soon to be abandoned. Steve Wyckham was up in the rigging on the look-out.

“Keep out an eye for those boys! Watch sharp!” said Captain Granby to Steve. He also gave an order that the vessel should continue to “lie to.”

“I was a fool to let those jackanapes go off,” he reflected, as he turned into his cabin. He was so much engrossed in dollars and cents that he gave no more heed to that fraction of his crew off in a boat, and remained in his cabin longer than he intended. When he came on deck again, he noticed that the sun was on the edge of the sea. He looked up into the rigging and, climbing a short distance, asked:

“Those two fools comin’ back in that boat? Do you see ’em, Steve?”

At the same time that he asked this question, Horace Haviland was finishing a remark he had begun to make to Steve. The two sailors were not far apart in the rigging, Horace at work on a rope that needed readjustment.

“Those young chaps ought to be back by this time,” said Horace. “They can row quite well, can’t they?”

"Do you see 'em?" said Captain Granby.

Instead of saying, "No, sir," to the captain, and then giving the affirmative answer to Horace, "I think so," he simply made this last reply.

Captain Granby could not hear very distinctly, but interpreted Steve's reply as one made to him, and as a favorable reply also. To make sure that he was right, the captain added, "Can't seem to make out that boat, but if you say you see them, all right."

Steve made no answer. The captain, not catching any objection to his opinion, descended to the deck and went into the cabin again, repeating his orders that the vessel should lie to.

The rope that Horace was at work upon gave him much trouble. He took out his sheath-knife to cut away a ragged end, but, as the end was not quite ready for amputation, he thrust his knife into the sailor's ready vise—his teeth. He did not pay close attention to Steve's words, and as he had applied a voluntary gag to his mouth, he was not in a condition to make remarks.

"The look-out will see after that boat. It is

Steve's business," thought Horace, bending down closely to his perplexing rope.

"There!" he finally ejaculated. "That job is done!"

Trimming the rope's end he thrust his knife into its sheath, and then, looking off upon the sea hastily, muttered, "Steve is looking after 'em." He swung over into the shrouds and ran quickly down to the deck. He went to the fore-castle for a short time, as it seemed to him, and then, mounting to the deck again, he met Captain Granby.

"Boys back, I s'pose, eap'n?" said Horace, looking round for Ralph and Bob.

"N-n-no!" replied the captain impatiently. "Don't see where they are. I thought that Steve told me he could see them."

"I heard you say something and s'posed it was all right. My hands and mouth were full, for I had a bad job. Steve—"

"I'll rouse that dumb booby up in the rigging. Say!" he shouted, looking aloft. "Say; Steve! Do you see those two fools?"

"How can I see when it is gettin' dark?" replied Steve.

"Answer, yes or no!"

“No-o-o!” thundered Steve.

“You may add ‘sir.’”

“No, *sir*,” was the hesitating, sulky reply.

“Now you may come down and go below. I’ll have a man up there who can see something,” angrily yelled the captain.

“I can’t see when there is nothing to be seen,” growled Steve.

“You don’t *want* to see. That is what the matter is with you,” replied the captain, justly suspecting Steve’s sincerity. “This not keeping an eye out sharp for a couple of youngsters isn’t the thing.”

Those of the crew now on deck gathered about the captain and Steve, and then they opened ranks to let Steve, whose sullen face was blackening with wrath, pass to his retreat in the fore-castle. The affair occasioned much excitement among the crew, and the very just feeling was that Steve had not properly watched the boys and faithfully reported to the captain.

“He’d be willing to have Bob drift away and never come back,” said some one of the crew whose face Captain Granby could not see.

“I’ll teach him what is a look-out’s duty,” said the captain, peering over the vessel’s rail

into the shadows that crouched dark and heavy upon the waters. He directed that all the canvas should be gathered in, and that the *Andromeda* should "lie to through the night."

"We'll stay right here, if we can, jest where we are," said the captain. "In the mornin' we may pick 'em up."

And the boys? They were not pulling now, but in the deepening twilight were looking in every direction for the much wanted *Andromeda*.

"I did wish," said Bob, trying to speak in as brave tones as possible—"I did wish, the other day, when we were working so hard, that I might not see any try-works again for a century. I wish now they were at the mast-head of the *Andromeda*, blazing away furiously. Then we should have a light to guide us."

"What I am afraid of, Bob, is that a mist is coming up, and it has hidden the ship and will hide any lights."

Ralph was right. Captain Granby hung lights in the rigging of the *Andromeda* as if for an illumination in honor of a good whaling voyage, but a mist veiled them.

"What shall we do, Bob?"

“Do nothing. Wish we had taken a compass. Ought to have been one in this boat, but, for some reason, somebody took it out yesterday. We can do nothing now.”

“You mean not to row at all?”

“That’s it; we don’t know which way to row, and seems to me we had better stir from this place as little way as possible. I don’t believe the *Andromeda* will leave us. She will cruise round for us in the morning, and we don’t want to be far from the place where she left us. She will find us.”

“O, yes! No doubt about that,” declared Ralph, in as courageous tones as possible. “I’m hungry, thirsty, too. Wonder if there is any water in our keg.”

“O, yes, I imagine so.”

There was a water-keg in the boat, and Ralph lifted it and tasted it at the bung-hole.

“Quite good, Bob! Have some?”

“Thank you. I’ll have a swig to keep up my courage, you know. And here are some crackers in this box.”

“Good!”

“O, we will live like princes.”

The boys talked awhile, and then Ralph asked,

“Now, Bob, shall we both watch? Shall—”

“Guess we both won’t sleep. Let’s keep awake! I can’t go to sleep in this old boat.”

Ralph assented, but a tired body is a heavy drag upon all purposes of wakefulness, and both the voyagers began to yawn.

“Bob, we have got to give in. I’ll watch, and you sleep.”

“No, you turn in, or turn down, and I’ll keep my eyes open. I will wake you up.”

Bob generally had his way in any of the outdoor ventures that the boys prosecuted, his strength and energy being superior, and Ralph agreed to “turn in.” This meant to make himself comfortable on the bottom of the boat in the dryest place he could find. Bob noticed that Ralph was silent before lying down. He knew Ralph’s habits thoroughly, and he said to himself, “Ralph is saying his prayers. He wouldn’t miss those for any thing.”

No sooner had this thought flashed through Bob’s mind than another followed it—“Why don’t you pray?”

Rough and careless as a ship-life is, Bob had come every day under the influence of Ralph so fully that it had not been lost upon him. He

had done at sea what he had not been accustomed to do at home—he had read his Bible. The “Sunday singing” had done its quiet work. The thoughts in the hymns were like the silent dropping of seed in his heart. Seed will lie in the ground unsuspected until, under the stimulus of some day of unusual sunshine or fall of gracious rain, there is a sudden opening of the coats imprisoning the shoot, and up comes the welcome growth.

That night Bob did some serious thinking. “How quietly Ralph is sleeping,” he said. “Awful lonely place here!” He looked up into the heavens. There was a thin veil of mist thrown over the sky, and through it the stars were trying to shine. He looked where he supposed the sea was, and there nothing could be discovered. Only a great, black emptiness! “No—something is there!” thought Bob, reaching his hand over the boat’s side and touching the water. It was a relief to feel the water. As if to assure Bob that something was about him, and not a great, awful vacuum, the water softly beat against the sides of the boat and played about his hand.

“Off in the Pacific—I don’t know where—

makes you nervous! What makes Ralph sleep so?" thought Bob. "He prays and goes to sleep. It seems to quiet him."

Then this thought flashed through his soul: "Why shouldn't you pray?"

"I don't know why I don't, I am sure," said Bob. "Would God hear me? Where is he?"

And then there seemed to be aroused in Bob's soul a desire, a craving, a hunger, for sympathy, companionship, love. In the night, away off on the ocean, alone, his companion asleep, in that gently rocking boat, the darkness disclosing nothing save a few, far-away, faint stars, Bob Walker had this desire aroused within him. And then came one of the Sunday hymns to his memory. It seemed as if he could hear Ralph's clear treble, Roaring Ben's deep bass, the sweet, musical tenor of "the old man," John Wilson, while "Volcano" sang a low, plaintive alto. And these were the words wafted on the wings of that remembered harmony:

"Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high!

Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide,
O receive my soul at last."

"I can't help it," murmured Bob. "Now or never."

Down he dropped upon his knees and turned his face up toward the great, lonely sky. What he said, he never could recall. He hardly knew what he did, save this in general—that he gave up something—himself, his will; he received something—a presence, a friend, God, his Saviour.

Then he sat in silence awhile, looking contentedly down. At last he looked up. During his frequent watches on the deck of the *Andromeda*, at night, he had become familiar with that beautiful constellation—the Southern Cross. And now in the heaven, still veiled, yet thinly, he could trace some of the outlines of that glorious group of stars.

"That is a sign of hope," he said.

He could tell from its position what time it was.

"My watch is up!" he said.

Reaching over to Ralph, he laid his hand gently upon him.

“He sleeps sound! Too bad to wake him!” said Bob. “I’ll let him sleep longer. Hullo!” he suddenly exclaimed. “This boat drifting? I—I believe it is. I—I suspected that.”

When he held his hand down in the water, there seemed to be a movement against it. He caught the sound of a gentle rushing. This he had noticed several times. And what dark object was it ahead—or wasn’t it an object? It could not be the hull of the *Andromeda*, of course. He was relieved when he heard Ralph stirring in the boat. Ralph had concluded to wake himself up.

“Ugh! Hullo!” he said nervously. “What is—this? Where—are—we?”

“In the boat, you know.”

“Oh-h-h!”

It was an exclamation of disappointment.

“And look, Ralph! You see this black thing ahead?”

Ralph rubbed his eyes, thought he did see something, and hoped it wasn’t a rock.

“No, but that old wreck, isn’t it?”

“Hadn’t we better keep off from it? Might be a rock, and some current about it.”

Bob at first was for boldly approaching the

object, but Ralph's more prudent counsel prevailed. Nearing this mysterious something cautiously, Ralph reached out an oar and struck it, while Bob kept the boat off with another oar.

"Bob, it is wood! It is that piece of wreck. Let us go up to it."

Bob declared it was like meeting an old friend, and, as they lingered about it, Ralph proposed that they should moor the boat to it and wait till morning.

"All right, Ralph! I have an idea that this thing is aground, for she doesn't seem to be stirring. Fact is, Ralph, we have been in a current—"

"And didn't know it! That is so. I thought it was strange we did not get ahead faster when we were trying to find the *Andromeda*. The current was against us, and when we stopped rowing it took us back where the wreck was, and I guess you were right. This piece of the *Caspar* got aground, and we caught up with it."

"Got aground, Ralph? Then do you suppose we are near that island we saw last night? Hurrah!"

The enthusiastic Bob was obliged to give vent to his delight, though he was adrift on the

Pacific, and though it was night, and though—but what was it the boys saw off in the lonely sky?

“It isn’t daylight, is it, Bob?” asked Ralph.

No, it was too soft and silvery, and yet it was light.

“The moon!” cried Ralph.

“Hurrah!” shouted Bob.

It was not a brilliant moon, and the mist that had veiled different sections of the sea tried to throw a screen before this new, soft light. There was enough illumination to bring out into form the wreck, and—what else could the boys soon trace?

“Ralph, now you may say what you please—”

“I haven’t said any thing.”

“You hold on, and what will you say to this? Look off there! That sort of bank is the island we saw last night. Yes, sir! *Hur-rah!* And hark! What do you hear?”

“Don’t hear any thing, save the water round the wreck.”

“Just cast that rope off, and pull away from it, just a few strokes.”

“O, Bob!”

Ralph was afraid that Bob would leave the certain for the uncertain—the wreck for an unknown island.

“I’ll answer for consequences,” replied Bob, with characteristic decision untying the rope, and Ralph as usual submitting.

“There! You see you couldn’t hear distinctly at the wreck, but I have caught it several times during the night—a sound like surf. Hark!”

“Yes, I hear it.”

“Now, Ralph, let us go there,” proposed Bob, with startling energy. “Come on, Ralph! Now is your chance to see something of the world. Come on!”

“Hold on, Bob, hold on! Let us think it over.”

“Don’t want to think, but go. You see—you see—”

“But the *Andromeda*?”

“Would find us just as quick there. You see, we could build a fire or climb a tree, and throw out a flag—”

“Flag?”

“Well, pants or shirt, then.”

“But, savages!”

That was what Bob needed to fire him up to greater zeal.

“O, Ralph! I would like to see some of them. They won’t hurt. You know we have harpoons and lances. Besides, we can push off in the morning before they are up, if we want to. Besides, Ralph, what if a storm should come! We don’t want to be off here. Get on shore, where you are safe, where you can get water, where you will find cocoanuts, where—”

“Come on, Bob! I’m agreed.”

The current that had shifted their location during the night helped them now, for they made a swift advance. At times they stopped and caught the musical sound of surf, not angry, but hushed; not the rough, loud drum-beat of the storm, but the play of the water in fair weather. Still, a storm might come, and it was much more agreeable, Ralph thought, to go ashore now, easily and voluntarily, than to be hurled there in a tempest.

“You see,” said Bob, as the two pulled stoutly away, “there is that current off there we got into, and if we had held on and a storm broken on us, we might have come ashore in a style we didn’t like. Getting ’most there?”

“Almost, Bob!”

The trees on the island rose up in a dark, shadowy wall, but nearer, nearer, and the surf sounded louder.

“Here we are, Bob!” shouted Ralph. “Got to the shore-waves! Steady!”

“Steady it is! Here we are!”

Up and down, up and down, in the gentle cradle of the surf, rocked the boat, and soon was safely beached. The last of the surf inclosed the boat in a net-work of molten silver, flashing in the white light of the moon.

“Ship oars!” Ralph had shouted.

The two boys sprang out and, pulling the boat beyond the reach of the low waves, went up the sands still higher and sat down in the edge of a grove.

“Ha-ha, Bob! Isn't this romantic?”

“Yes, Ralph; and we are safe, too. It is good to feel that you are safe on land. Good to have a foundation under you. Now we know where we are—in one sense.”

“Wonder what they are doing on board the *Andromeda*, Bob?”

“I wonder! Well, *we* are safe. You see, Ralph,” said Bob, looking up to the branches of

the trees overhead, "I suppose these are cocoanut-trees, and we have all the fruit we want. Can't starve, you know."

"They say the cocoanut palm is invaluable, Bob. It will supply posts and walls for a house—and, you know, we have a hatchet to cut trees down with—and then the cocoanut palm gives you materials for thatching and for mats—"

"Can carpet our floors, Ralph, and when our clothes give out we can weave a new suit. You would make a good tailor, I know. Ha-ha!"

The boys, sitting under the branches of the trees, looking off upon the gentle throw of silver-like surf in the moonlight, laughed at the thought that they were about to turn into carpenters and tailors.

"You can get oil, Bob, out of the cocoanut, so that we are sure of a light by night. There is our lantern in the boat, and we can fill that with cocoanut oil when it is empty. We can compete with the sperm oil factories."

The boys laughed again to think that they were to become oil-makers!

"You know, Bob, they make rope out of the fiber in the old stems. We shall have to build a rope-walk at once."

“Lucky! Who would go back to the *Andromeda*?”

The boys sat under the trees joking and laughing, planning how to live in the kingdom of the cocoanut-tree, a small section of which they had invaded. Gradually, the languor of needed sleep stole over them and made them drowsy. They nodded their heads, bowed lower, and at last they both sank into the depths of a grateful slumber. It was Ralph who, in his dreams, thought with alarm of one object that in their plans for the future had not been mentioned. What was that object? In his turn Bob was dreaming of a life with Ralph in a palm log-hut, saying to himself how strange, after his readings about Robinson Crusoe and Swiss Family Robinson, to think that he himself was to have such an exceptional, fascinating experience. He was meditating upon a name for a possible book, *The Two Castaways*, or *Thrown Upon a Desert Island*, when all these thoughts were routed by a scream from Ralph. This other dreamer fancied he felt the touch of a man's hand, an awful touch that started on the forehead, proceeded to the nose, diverged to each cheek, and—it was the touch of a savage!

“Ugh!” screamed Ralph, springing up, only to find that the invader of his seclusion had been the long leaf of a shrub under which he had rolled in his uneasy sleep. The movement of the leaf in the early morning breeze explained that horrible savage touch. Bob was now awake also.

“That ugly savage!” exclaimed Ralph, rubbing his eyes open.

“Where?” said Bob looking round.

He rose upon his feet, and, in the strong light of the new day flooding the sea, looked off. Did he see an aborigine, a cannibal, say?

“Hurrah! That is—not—your savage!”

He stood pointing off the shore, and there, calmly floating, was the—*Andromeda*! The sight of the old whaler, with the big blocks at the mast-head, was so fascinating! Those dark blocks looked handsomer than any jewel. Farewell to the fascinations of a Juan Fernandez life! The boys seized their boat, rushed it into the surf, and began to pull for their old friend. Up, down, up, down, beyond the sweep of the shore-waves at last glided the boat of the young whalers, forsaking all those tempting objects—the log-hut, rope-walk, and cocoanut-oil factory.

“Do they see us?” anxiously asked Ralph, turning his head round when they had rowed a little while.

“Can’t say, Ralph, but—yes, yes! They see us! I can see them looking over the vessel’s rail—and they are waving their hands—and, yes, somebody is up in the rigging, waving, I believe.”

“Let us stand up and give three cheers, Bob! Come on!”

The cheers of the boys as they stood up in the boat, echoed over the water, and from the *Andromeda* came an answering and bigger shout of welcome.

“Here is the wreck again, Bob! Grounded on some reef! We must not let the *Andromeda* come any nearer. She is in that current, I am afraid.”

“She will be all right, Ralph! She is moving off to the left there, and I don’t know but that she is going to drop anchor.”

The rattle of the *Andromeda*’s cable was heard as her anchor sank into the water.

“Soon there, Bob! Row, row!”

“Spring for it, Ralph?”

Encouraging one another, the boys quick-

ened their efforts as if a canoe load of savages were after them, and were soon alongside the whaler.

“Hullo, Bob!” “How are ye, Ralph?” “Aboard with you!” “Home again!” “How do you like life on an island?” were among the greetings that the boys received.

Captain Granby, Roaring Ben, Horace Haviland, 'Rastus the cook, “the old man,” “Volcano”—every body, it seemed, excepting Steve Wyckham—were all on hand to receive Ralph and Bob as they climbed over the vessel's rail.

It was so good to get back to the old craft, to the greasy decks, even, and the very try-pots! The *Andromeda* soon weighed anchor, and opened her canvas wings to catch a breeze freshening above the waters. Bob and Ralph leaned over the vessel's rail and watched the receding wreck and island.

“There goes the *Caspar*, Bob! Good-bye!”

“Ralph, the island is growing smaller! Good-bye!”

“Yes, farewell to that valuable tree, the coconut palm, waving beautifully in a South Sea wind!”

“Yes, and to our house of palm-logs!”

“And the palm-leaf matting for the floors!”

“And to our fashionable palm-leaf suits!”

“And to the beautiful—savage who woke me up!”

“I began to think of writing a book, and didn’t know as I would change places with the happiest man in Oldburyport!”

“Good-bye, *Caspar*!”

“Good-bye, island-home!”

What was left of the *Caspar* subsided to the level of the ocean, and then melted away amid its foam. The palm-trees on the island lowered their proud heads, bowed down to the level of the wave-tops, and so sank out of sight.

One of the results of a rough experience is to lead us to appreciate the daily line of comforts which we may have despised and constantly depreciated as humble and hard. What soft cushions they are when we get back to them!

In his berth, that night, Ralph leaned forward and, looking out, said to Bob, his next neighbor,

“I didn’t know this old bunk could seem so precious. I sha’n’t have any fear of savages or storms. Good-night!”

“Good night! Fearful sleepy! I’ve—got home!”

That night, Bob had done something strange for him. He had got down by his bunk and thought gratefully of God. Both the boys in their sleep dreamed of home.

For Oldburyport, the *Andromeda* soon spread its wings.

CHAPTER XVII.

A WONDERFUL MEETING.

IT was Sunday afternoon in the old fore-castle. A rough place it was, and the hard usage of a whaling voyage had told on the floor and also the bunks, that had begun the voyage in a commendable state of neatness. The "chaplain" was singing with the sailors who chose to gather at this time. Some of them were seated on several battered chests, and, leaning over the old, well-thumbed books, were roaring out their interest in the exercises of the hour. There were three seamen carelessly stretched out in their bunks. Their posture said, "If we find the singing tiresome, we can try to sleep."

The chaplain had given out several hymns whose sentiment strongly appealed to any seaman, the waves seeming to rock in the sentences, and when a storm was described, in the notes of the singers was developed a corresponding energy. Bob sang as intensely as any body.

“We will try now something different,” finally said the chaplain. “Try the hymn,

“‘Jesus, and shall it ever be,
A mortal man ashamed of thee?’”

It was a long meter tune, moving slowly, with dignity, and there was a certain plaintive quality to the melody in harmony with the tender, almost tearful, appeals in the sentiment. Bob soon found that the hymn and the air were strangely, strongly moving him. There would not have been this effect in such a marked degree had not an incident of the previous day been suggested. Steve Wyckham had been in disgrace after the affair of the last chapter. Captain Granby had publicly reprimanded him and had deprived him of several privileges.

“Couldn’t have treated me wuss if he had ironed me!” complained Steve to another seaman.

The crew abhorred his style of treating shipmates who were out on the water, and whose safety depended on his faithfulness as a look-out. For a while, Steve was sulkily silent. By degrees, though, he ventured to creep out of this silence, and to a few of the crew, who were men

after his style of character, he would express his opinion. He was one of a group that, clustered in the vessel's bows, the Saturday before this "Sunday singing," discussed the gatherings in the old fore-castle Sunday afternoons. Very naturally Bob would not be attracted by any such group. He chanced to be standing near them, and, while they were busily talking, he was as busily coiling a rope, and with all the ready skill of an old sailor. He could hear every thing that they said.

"I don't think so much of this psalm-singing," exclaimed Dan Avery.

"Nor I," replied Bill Tappan. "Folks are awful pious sometimes, when they git into a for'e'stle and roar out a lot of goody stuff."

"You don't ketch 'em doin' it any other time," said Dan. "I mean their piousness. Don't show that."

"Doin' it any other time!" exclaimed Steve. "You'd never know how they felt from any thing they say any other time. They act as if they was ashamed to stand up and own the society they belong to. When folks on shore jine a society, they're tickled to put on their badge, but these fellers aint. If I belonged, I'd

have out my badge and clap it on purty quick. They're ashamed."

"That's so!" "You've got 'em there!" "Hit the mark there!" were the responses to this expression of opinion.

"Do they mean me?" thought Bob, as he now moved away, his coil of rope neatly completed.

This expression of opinion by Steve and the others was accidental. It had no reference to Bob on the part of those uttering the opinion. They did not even know he had been there. When they turned about they saw a very neat coil of rope.

"Who did that while we were here?" asked Steve.

Nobody knew.

"That's a good coil," declared Steve.

The words, though, which Bob had heard by chance could not have more powerfully stirred him had they been arrows sent by an intentional archer aiming at Bob's heart. He had not spoken to any one about the night of his exposure with Ralph out upon the ocean, when, kneeling in the gently swaying boat, he looked up and besought the blessing of his God. He had

not told this to Ralph even. It was not a lost experience by any means, and therefore unconfessed. It survived the excitement of that night, and lasted beyond the next day. He kept on praying. He was conscious that there was a changed purpose in his life. He wondered if it was what people called "conversion." He doubted it, because he looked for something more emotional. In that case he expected to feel more deeply on the subject.

"I shall certainly be happier when I am converted," he thought, "and I know I shall feel I am a bigger sinner. Don't feel now, for some reason, but I suppose I shall. However, I am going to follow this thing up. Perhaps it will lead to conversion if I do follow it up."

If Bob had analyzed his feelings, it would have been apparent to him that this interest, whatever it was, followed *him* up. It did not leave his thoughts. He seemed to have come into a new relation to God, and he thought about him as one ever present and seeking to bring Bob into closer communion with himself. Bob seemed also to have come into a new relation to his ship-mates. He felt that he ought to think

more about their welfare in every way; that he ought to help them by a good example certainly. Toward his Bible and toward prayer he seemed to have come into a different attitude—that of interest in them because they were necessary to him.

“I suppose I shall take still more interest in this book when I am converted,” said Bob, handling his Bible one day. It was the little volume Carrie had given him. “However, I like to look at it as it is, and I feel that I ought, somehow. Of course, if God is a Father to us, we ought to read the book telling about him. And then I can’t seem to do without the book. It helps me stand up, and comforts me. When I am converted, I suppose, though, my liking for the book will be nothing like what it is now. It will go beyond any thing now.”

Bob did not understand the nature of the new life upon which he had entered. He had really crossed the dividing-line between the old life of indifference to God and the new life of interest in him and submission to him. He had gone over the line of conversion and did not know it. The only abiding proofs of conversion are its fruits, not simply in our feelings, but still more

in our doings. Bob was expecting some marvelous change whenever conversion came. He was ignorant. He was like a man who, in the early dawn of a winter morning, steps from the sharp, outside cold into the warm summer-like air of a hot-house. He can feel a change, but, amid the shadows, he cannot appreciate it. He can see growing plants, and there is foliage. He cannot see bud or flower. He only says, "It is warm and pleasant here in this hot-house." Let him wait, though, and the light from the east will pour about him, and bud and blossom will be seen. Bob was inside a new life, but it was very early morning, and he could not see as he certainly would in later days. The best thing about Bob's experience, simple and humble as it seemed, was that it showed a purpose to go on, looking to God, trusting in the mercy expressed in Jesus Christ, trying to do for others in God's strength.

"I am going to stick to this thing," declared Bob in his heart.

When the new life comes to us, under it is this root of a good purpose, begotten of God, to live in him and for him. If Bob could have analyzed his feelings he would have noticed also

a deepening of interest in the little group who supported the Sunday singing. Within that circle he felt that there was an atmosphere in sympathy with the new feelings and views that had come to him. He was hardly conscious of the stronger attraction that that simple observance of Sunday now had for him.

“Sort of good to be here. Seems like home,” silently declared Bob, this particular Sunday afternoon of our story. That rough, soiled fore-castle, the old bunks, the battered chests, were very much unlike home, but the unseen spirit of the occasion, like the unobserved heat of a spring day, was grateful to Bob, and it made the life within blossom out into new emotions. In the midst of all this, suddenly Bob recalled Steve’s words about the Sunday singers: “They act as if they was ashamed to stand up and own the society they belong to.”

While this was echoing in his memory, in his ears sounded the strains of the hymn, which had now reached this stanza :

“Ashamed of Jesus! Sooner far
Let evening blush to own a star;
He sheds the beams of light divine
O'er this benighted soul of mine.”

Bob was deeply stirred by the hymn, and also by the question whether in any way he had given Steve or others a reason to think that he was ashamed to wear openly and always the badge of one who wanted, at least, to be a Christian.

“If I am not ashamed, why—why—not speak now of what I want to do?” thought Bob.

He looked about him. He listened. They were singing the next verse :

“Ashamed of Jesus! that dear Friend
On whom my hopes of heaven depend!
No; when I blush be this my shame,
That I no more revere his name.”

It seemed to Bob as if he could not wait until the hymn had been concluded. There was the swelling of a strange desire within him to rise, to open his mouth, and somehow say to others emphatically that he meant to follow Christ. The opportunity came at last. The final couplet had just been closed :

“And O, may this my glory be,
That Christ is not ashamed of me!”

Bob was upon his feet at once. In his excitement it seemed as if he threw himself back and

stood up straighter than ever ; his fine, muscular form showing its manly proportions. His dark eyes flashed in his earnestness. His hair, that curled above his brow, revealed while it half concealed the symmetrical build of the forehead.

He began :

“I don't know but that you will be surprised—”

He hesitated. His auditors certainly were startled, and they looked up to see what Bob would say next.

“But I wanted—to let you know where I stood. I am trying to be a Christian. I can't say that I have much success. However, I am not ashamed of Jesus, and I mean to put his badge on and wear it. Yes, I will.”

Down he sat. It was done in Bob's quick, impulsive way, decidedly ; and in the tone of a proclamation to the world that he was not at all ashamed of Him whom he acknowledged as his Friend. Ralph looked at Bob in delight. He was prepared and he was not prepared for it. He had prayed for Bob that he might come into the light of God's love and service, and if we believe in prayer we ought not to be surprised when our prayers are answered. He had

seen Bob's interest in his Bible and in the Sunday singing, and he had felt that Bob's sympathies were all on the right side. Still, nothing like this had been ever declared by Bob, and his words that day came with unanticipated force. Ralph could not seem to find a ready answer, and he just looked his pleasure. Because Ralph was silent, there was no awkward pause in the meeting. Wilson, "the old man," rose at once from the battered old chest he occupied, and said it did him good to hear his young brother, and he would promise to stand by him, and he hoped they all would not be ashamed to stand up for Jesus. There was now developed an atmosphere of interest in which the hard thing was not to speak, but to keep still. The shipmate whose name once was only "Volcano" now arose.

"Of course," he said, "you all know where Rufus Ring stands, but I sort of like to say it. I got hold of a Friend when I began to pray. I would like to say it, but I don't want to stop with the saying, for I mean to *do* it. Count me in as wearin' that badge Bob told of."

He paused.

"You know what I once was. I can recom-

mend the religion of Jesus. It took all the swear out of me.”

The chaplain was moved to offer his testimony, and then who would follow him? It seemed as if the stock of remarks must be exhausted, but any close observer would have noticed that Horace Haviland’s hands and feet were working nervously, and his face was flushed, and several times he cleared his throat as if about to speak. Up he sprang finally, and in an embarrassed but sincere, earnest way, exclaimed,

“I don’t suppose—you were expecting—me to say—any thing, but I really would—like to say a word. I—I—know—I am weak before a glass of liquor. If I could get it *behind* me! But I see you, shipmates, talking this way—that—saying that religion will take the swear out of a man, and why wont it—take the liquor? That’s what I want to know. I am going home. I shall meet temptation. Aint there any help?”

“Pray, pray!” said two of his auditors.

“If I thought—” replied Horace.

“Try it!” cried Bob.

“Yes!” urged the chaplain.

“I will!” said Horace decidedly, and down he sat.

“Let us try to pray!” said the chaplain.

There in the old fore-castle a circle of petitioners was formed. It was formed on a good foundation, their knees, but their souls touched a lower place—the foot of the cross; and there they cried to God. Short cries, and sent out of earnest hearts. Bob prayed. When he had finished he nudged Horace, and whispered,

“You pray!”

Horace did say something, but what it was he could never afterward recall. It was very much like a famous old prayer our Saviour told about—short and humble and very penitent—the publican’s prayer.

When the little meeting broke up they looked at one another in a glad surprise, and the language of the look was, “It is a wonderful meeting!”

It was indeed a wonderful meeting. Other Sunday afternoons came, and brought gatherings of much interest, but none were like that meeting. The cloud seemed to gather and break and the rain pour down at that meeting, and into the hearts of two especially, Bob and

Horace, ran the strengthening waters of a new life.

Whether it was rain to deeply penetrate one's spiritual being and abide there, or the hasty surface-flow of a transient experience, we shall see.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SAIL! A SAIL!

“I DON’T see where the *Andromeda* is,” said Sardinius Walker, who would, several times a day, climb the garret stairs and, from the window facing the sea, look off for some sign of the whaler.

As invariably as he went up hoping, he came down disappointed. Each time, too, his walk was feebler. One morning, he said:

“Daughter, I think—I think—I wont go up to look off to-day.”

“You feel sick, father?” asked Alma solicitously.

“O, no! Only more tired, you know.”

Alma was not satisfied to drop the matter here. She consulted Dr. Bates, the family physician.

“Well, Alma, I will tell you what,” said the doctor in an authoritative tone. “Your father is losing vitality—growing indifferent, you know; weak—and he needs to be aroused into interest

—into activity. He needs a good, healthful, galvanic shock from some source, so to speak. Now, if a certain big sailor-boy that I know of should come from sea, healthy and strong and vitalizing, I think it would start him—your father, I mean—into a more healthy condition; wake him up, you know. It is a case of will acting on will, also of a physical nature abounding in vitality and magnetism acting on a nature that is deficient. That may sound like a theory without a foundation, but I don't believe it is, in this case. I don't believe in giving medicine for your father, but would like to see my ideas tried."

"Then I wish that sailor-boy would come 'quick meter,' doctor," said Alma energetically; and when the doctor had gone from the house she said, "I will go up and take a look myself, and see if there is any sign of a ship coming into harbor."

She came down exclaiming, "Pshaw!"

One morning, though, the boyish voice of Billy rang down the stairs leading to the kitchen where Alma was at work;

"O, Alma, I just saw a ship!"

Alma was sweeping. Clinging to the broom-

handle she flew up-stairs and along the garret-floor to the window where stood Billy. It was the same window where Sardinus Walker, standing day after day, had in vain looked off upon the blue ocean, seeing only—water.

“Where, Billy? where?”

The grinning Billy nodded toward the form of a ship that he had cut out of paper and then pasted upon the glass pane.

“O, Billy! Was that right—to get sister up here just to see that?”

“I thought you wanted to see something,” replied Billy, hanging his head.

“Sister was very busy.”

Billy, who was like some other people that are very tender-hearted after a mischievous deed, stole away softly and sheepishly, and left Alma alone in the old garret. It was so quiet up there under the brown roof. The still atmosphere was very restful to Alma. She turned toward Billy’s ship and laughed. The sound of her laugh in the dusty old garret was very pleasant.

“Wish I had laughed with Billy!” she said.

“It rests me to be up here.”

So much of the daily fight for existence fell

to the lot of her sword and shield that it is no wonder she was wearied. She was glad to have this little truce of peace up in the old garret. She looked about her. There were her bundles of scented herbs hanging from the brown, dusty rafters. There were the old pieces of Winthrop furniture piled up in one corner. There were the old books amid which her father found the Winthrop genealogy.

“Wonder whose Bible that was!” she said, turning back the covers of a volume very old and battered. There was a name within. She gave a start when she read it—“Alma Winthrop!”

“Did not know there was any one with my name, though the squire says we are connected,” she exclaimed, delighted to meet with the name. “Mother, too, says there is Winthrop-blood as well as Winslow-blood in us; that there has been an intermarrying, though there may never be again.”

Alma did not like to follow the thread of this last thought any farther. She turned over the musty heap of books again; old histories, old school-books, old stories. Then she came back to that other book, Alma Winthrop’s Bible.

“Ought to go—but I will stop, though,” she said, “just to look over here.”

She turned in the direction of the Psalms, where, in her own Bible, she had found many favorite resting-places for her tired thoughts. She now read, “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”

“That rests me,” said Alma, closing the book. “I must go down-stairs to my work now.”

Before descending, she turned toward the window, one of whose panes still carried Billy’s disgraced ship. But looking across the tree-tops, feathery with the new green foliage of the spring, beyond the house-roofs of the old town, out on the expanding, blue water, what was it that Alma detected?

A tower of white canvas shining in the morning sun!

“A sail,” said Alma, “coming round Jeffrey’s Point! If that were only the *Andromeda*! But there! it may be the *Gibraltar*, say, from the Mediterranean. Perhaps it is just a coaster. Well, it is some vessel coming from somewhere, and it will make somebody happy!”

She watched for a moment its slow, stately,

dignified approach to the town, and then in her energetic way hurried down-stairs.

It was three hours later. Alma's school was over. Mrs. Walker had already laid down her work, a dress that she was making, having said, "It is dreadful unprofitable, dress-makin' is. It is more profitable to get dinner, and I will get it."

Suddenly Billy's face—flushed, eager—appeared at the back door.

"O, mother!" he exclaimed. Then, seeing Alma, he rushed up to his mother and whispered, "Don't tell Alma! Let's give her a surprise!"

"There, Billy, do speak as if I wasn't most dead, and you thought a word aloud would kill me!" advised Mrs. Walker; and rather unpleasantly added, "I can't hear, child."

The rebuffed Billy shrank toward the door again.

"What is it, Billy?" asked Alma, pleasantly and encouragingly.

Billy, though, had inherited some, at least, of his mother's peculiarities, and, like her, he could sulk. He shook his head.

"What is it, Billy?" asked Alma again.

Hark! Was it a spring-bird whistling out

in the back yard? No, it was the blithe, energetic whistle of a skillful performer of the human kind. The tune came nearer.

“Why, mother,” said Alma, turning pale, “that sounds just like our Bob!”

The whistle approached the door, and before Alma and her mother could get to it a manly step sounded on the threshold, then the door itself was energetically thrown open, and there was the brown-faced sailor-boy—Bob!

“Hallo, folks! Here I am!” he shouted. “How are you?”

Such a screaming, and then a mute crying, Mother Walker seeming to wipe apronfuls of tears out of her eyes as she leaned her head on Bob’s strong shoulder. Alma could only say, “Why, Bob! Bless you, I say!” and then she also cried. Billy was the only seemingly joyful one of the group that received Bob. He capered about the room, threw up his hat, and shouted, “Hurrah!”

Bob was telling his mother and Alma not to cry, asking them if they were not glad to see “the prodigal” home once more, declaring it was so good to get ashore and see them again, when they all heard a steady thump—thump—thump

on the stairs leading to the kitchen, and a white face in a rim of gray hair and beard showed itself.

“Hallo, father!” shouted Bob, rushing forward.

“You don’t say that your father has come down-stairs! He hasn’t been down before for a week! And without his cane!” exclaimed Mrs. Walker.

“Tell him you’re glad to see him stirring,” whispered Alma to Bob when she could get a chance.

“Bob, my boy, how are you!” said Sardinus, gripping Bob’s hand and pumping it as if he never meant to get through.

“I am well, father, and I am glad to see you stirring round so nicely.”

“Thank you, Bob. I do believe I am going to get round well as ever. I don’t know but I shall go off whaling,” Sardinus dared to say with a smile.

“Good for you, father! You may be captain, and I will be crew. Captain Sardinus Walker, of the good ship *Arctic*! How does that sound, father?”

“It sounds well, Bob. I feel better already.”

And as Sardinius Walker continued to look at this vigorous, muscular young tar his eyes caught a sparkle from Bob's, his form straightened, and a new vitality seemed to run through and thrill his body.

"Just in time for dinner!" said Alma. "You shall have what you want, Bob."

It was a wonderful dinner that day, Bob sending out to buy a few delicacies, but the love that spread the feast, waited on the table, and made all that were there participants in the joy of the hour was the feature which gave the occasion its great attraction and charm.

"You haven't asked about Ralph, Alma," said Bob.

Alma hung her head, and pretended not to hear.

"Bob," said Ted in a low voice, "she—she—has sort of grown deaf, and can't seem to hear some words."

"Now, Ted! I sha'n't hear you, if you don't look out—I sha'n't hear you and give you a piece of my sugar pie when you want it."

It was not every day that an apple pie wholly sweetened with sugar appeared on the Walker table. A pie in which there was nothing but

molasses showed the cooking was for an ordinary occasion. As the ordinary approached the extraordinary, the molasses disappeared and sugar took its place. The character of the occasion could be determined by the amount of molasses or sugar in Alma's apple pies. To-day, nothing sufficed but white sugar, and Alma's threat hushed Ted at once. She had an opportunity speedily to learn about Ralph. That young mariner had suggested to Squire Winthrop that the Walkers might like some of the asparagus in the squire's big garden-bed, and the squire readily took the hint and Ralph bore off this kindly donation! Alas! Mrs. Walker came to the door, a feature of the programme unanticipated by Ralph. Alma had fled to the back stairs, and there listened eagerly and caught every word he uttered in response to her mother's solicitous inquiries about his health.

Looking out of the window, about the middle of the afternoon, Alma saw a second member of the crew of the *Andromeda* walking with Mary Haviland. It was Horace Haviland, and Mary's face was flushed with an inexpressible joy. Alma saw them near Stock's saloon, an infamous old rum-hole.

“Wonder if he will leave Mary and go in there!” thought Alma. “That is what Horace generally does.”

To her surprise and pleasure, Horace walked past the open door, where old cronies nodded and beckoned.

If Alma could have looked under the old but neat gray shawl covering the shoulders of Mary Haviland, she would have seen two thin hands nervously, tightly clasped.

“I will go praying past this bad place,” Mary had said in her thoughts.

Horace felt weak, but he walked past the temptation. He would have felt stronger if he could have seen the two clasped hands under his sister’s gray shawl.

One other member of the crew of the *Andromeda* Alma saw that day. It was toward evening. She had slipped through the hall, casting a triumphant glance at the scowling portrait on the wall. By her glance she meant to say, “I have a protector now. My brother Bob is at home.”

She went into the front room once occupied as a store and hastily looked out. Who was it halting before the steps leading to the front

door, as if desiring to come in, and yet undecided?

“Got a real bull-dog face!” said Alma. “However, here he comes, and I will go to the door and let him in.”

“The Willoughbys live here?” said Bull-dog.

“Yes, sir,” said Alma pleasantly, though she shrank before the bold, impudent glance of this bull-dog.

The young man began to remark that it was a pleasant evening. Rather than see the Willoughbys he preferred to gaze into the beautiful face that came suddenly out of the dark depths of the hall and looked at him like a star coming up out of the clouded spaces of the sky. Alma was not willing to linger, but promptly said, “If you wish to see the Willoughbys, please walk this way,” and she proceeded to cross the hall to a door upon which she tapped. An old lady quickly opened it. Wishing the Willoughbys in Europe, or some other conveniently distant place, the stranger passed beyond the door now opened to him and disappeared.

“Ahem—m—m!”

This sound came from the upper hall.

"Somebody is leaning over the rail of the staircase," thought Alma. "O, it is Bob!"

She joined him at once.

"Alma—where—where—did that feller come from?"

"That feller?"

"I don't know as you know, but it's one of our men, Steve Wyckham, and he has done me a lot of harm. I never told you, but he said I stole. You never thought that of me?"

"Why, of course not; and when folks said—"

"What folks?"

Then it all came out, what had been circulated about the town through the letter coming to the Willoughbys from the distant *Andromeda*, a letter sent by a sailor on board the whaler.

"And every body knows it?" asked Bob, walking the floor indignantly. "I didn't think it worth noticing in my letter."

"Now, Bob!" said Alma, laying her gentle but magnetic hands on her brother's shoulder. "None of us believed it, of course, and I don't believe the Willoughbys do. And that's the Steve Wyckham who sent home the lie!"

"How did you know his name?"

"The Willoughbys themselves told me."

“How—how did they come here?”

“I don’t wonder you ask. Well—let me tell you—they are real nice people. We wanted to let some of our rooms—to reduce expenses, you know—and we got a real estate broker to let them. Well, he hadn’t been in town long, and he didn’t know we had had any reason to dislike the Willoughbys, and the Willoughbys are not old residents and didn’t know who the people were that wanted to let the rooms, but were in a hurry to get somewhere, and took our rooms, and, you might say, were in them before we had a chance to say ‘Boo!’ And when I found out who they were, Bob, I didn’t know what to do! I was just stunned to think those people were in the house who had circulated that story about my brother! ‘Well, Alma Walker,’ I said, ‘here they are, and you must get along with them, somehow. Perhaps—perhaps, they can put a better face on this matter than you think for. However, here they are, and you must, *must*—that’s the word—get along with them, somehow. You must not go into a corner and sulk;’ I said. ‘You must see that Mrs. Willoughby, and make the best of her good points, for you must live beside her for a while at least ;

and you had better live beside what is good in her rather than what is bad—supposing there is any thing bad, you know, which might come out.’ So I went to her and talked with her, and she is a real nice old lady, and her husband is a nice old man. I told her about the letter, and how badly we felt, and she was real sorry. She said she was careless in reading the letter to a relative, who went home to another town, and there scattered the news that in this round-about way reached Oldburyport, but she would try to rectify her mistake and tell people—”

“You can’t very well get fire back that you pitch into a haymow,” said Bob stoutly.

“I know it, and there is the mischief, Bob, but she is sorry, and I think you will see that. She is really a nice old lady, and she says that Steve Wyckham is not a near relative, but one she has rarely seen, and she does not understand why Steve wrote to her—”

“O, he wanted to scatter his fire somewhere.”

“But don’t you mind it, Bob. The right is bound to win sometime. And did you notice that Mrs. Willoughby did not give Steve a very warm reception?”

“I thought she seemed rather quiet over his arrival.”

“Depend upon it, she is your friend. Now, you just go ahead and show that you have done right by being right, to-day—”

“My dear, venerable sister!” said Bob, laying his strong brown hands on her shoulder. “I am going to do the right thing in this matter, and I am very grateful to you for wishing to help me. Shouldn’t wonder if this slander turned up sometime and tried to trip me, but—but—I mean to go ahead and do what is right; and since I left home, I think I have found some One who will stand by me in trying to do right.”

That speech had the right ring. It contained something, too, that echoed very pleasantly in Alma’s thoughts that night, when she went to sleep—even Bob’s assurance that he had found a strong Friend. Bob, too, when he went to his rest, found comfort in the same thought. He seemed in his dreams to be on the deck of the *Andromeda* again. He was alone, save that Steve Wyckham was in a strange way at intervals appearing, trying to control the helm and head the *Andromeda* for an ugly reef of rocks.

When, though, this cruel, wrecking purpose might threaten to be successful, some power would interfere, check and prevent Steve, and the *Andromeda* would continue to sail prosperously on.

“I have a Friend that will stand by me,” murmured the tired sailor-boy in his dreams.

CHAPTER XIX.

A WRECK THAT WAS NOT A WRECK.

“COME in!”

This was a response to Bob's knock on the door of the office where John Winthrop & Sons were supposed still to send out ships and also to welcome ships back. In the rear of the building in which this office was located, stretched a long wharf out into the wide, blue river. On the roof of the building was a little railed platform with a flag-staff. From that look-out any approaching vessel could be watched, and if it belonged to “John Winthrop & Sons,” a bright little flag would flutter from the flag-staff. The day the *Andromeda* arrived, the stars and stripes were thrown to the breeze from the crown of this flag-staff, and it did old sea-captains who never would sail a craft again much good to look up and see that fluttering signal of a fresh arrival from the sea. The firm of John Winthrop & Sons, that was supposed to number several active and vigorous partners,

and to do all this sending out and receiving back, in reality did very little of the work.

John Winthrop, the squire's father, long had been dead. The squire and his brothers, Isaac and Josiah, were the "sons." These brothers were dead. They were single, and left no heir, male or female, to continue an interest in the business. One old man, the squire, continued to write "John Winthrop & Sons." It was not in so bold a hand as formerly, for the squire's late sickness had affected his signature, and the firm name, "John Winthrop & Sons," looked like a vessel trembling before the assault of heavy seas. The squire had a faithful old clerk, Thomas Alden, who cared for his interests, and really did the business of the firm, and it was his ready, decided voice that said "Come in!" when Bob knocked at the office-door of John Winthrop & Sons.

"The squire in?" asked Bob.

The clerk made no reply, but nodded in the direction of a door opening out of this office into some apartment beyond.

"All right! I'll wait," said Bob, who caught the sound of voices in the room.

"If I can do any thing for you, I may save

you the trouble of waiting," said the obliging clerk.

"Thank you, Mr. Alden. I—I—don't know as it will do any good to speak of it."

Bob twirled his hat in his hands.

"It won't do any harm, at any rate. So out with it, Bob!"

A philanthropic look out of the old clerk's spectacles helped Bob to go on.

"Well, sir, though I have got my hand in as a sailor, it doesn't seem to me as if I had better go off again, just now, at any rate; and you know father is pretty feeble."

"I see, Bob, I see! Exactly!"

"Well, I wondered if I couldn't get something ashore, and the next thing to going to sea is to—to—"

"Don't be bashful, Bob!"

"Is to get a chance in a shipping-office. There! Do you suppose the squire wants a clerk?"

The old clerk laughed.

"I don't know as the squire feels his need of any help, but I should like a lift. I had as lief have you as any body, and much rather have you than a good many I can think of."

“That is encouraging. Thank you!”

“Only, Bob”—and here the old clerk looked toward the inner door—“the squire probably feels like retrenching rather than enlarging his expenses. Perhaps you know—”

“Yes, I heard something about it on the street. A vessel lost, wasn’t there?”

“That is it, or part of it. The vessel was heavily insured—”

“Then why don’t the insurance folks pay over the money?”

“There’s the rub. Their agent, by the way, is in that room now. He lives here, and the company in New York told him to talk the matter over and report to them. They claim that there is not sufficient evidence of the loss of the vessel. Well, all we can claim is that the vessel left port and has not been heard from except—”

“Haven’t the crew turned up?”

“Not a man of them. O, the ship is lost, no doubt about it! She was seen just after a heavy storm, and she flew a signal of distress. The vessel that saw her was herself disabled, and could render no aid and went on. O, the craft was lost! Why, Bob, I feel as sure of it as that I am sitting here.”

“And I suppose that the insurance money is wanted by the squire.”

“Exactly. Then, you know, the *Andromeda* brought home part of another whaler’s cargo.”

This was a re-enforcement received at a Chili port, where the *Andromeda* called, and, according to previous agreement, she took a part of the cargo of another whaler that went off again on a second cruise.

“Well, the squire is obliged to pay for the oil transferred to the *Andromeda*, and at rates such that he can’t realize the profit that he expected to get—the oil-market not being so favorable as it was—and all this, you see, we feel. O, I tell them we shall weather the storm all right; but, you see, we have got to take in spare canvas.”

“And not use any you don’t need; and that means you can’t hire a clerk? They talk pretty earnestly, don’t they?”

It was the squire’s voice that could now be heard.

“Getting to be pretty warm work in there,” observed the clerk. “The squire yesterday didn’t have strength enough to talk much above a whisper. You know he is getting that weak he has to ride in his carriage to the office. Used to

pride himself on walking every day, stiff as a major. Poor man! Had to come to riding at last! That's the squire."

The squire's voice could now be plainly heard:

"I tell you, sir—"

"That's the squire," observed the clerk, "and he is talking to that insurance agent, a mean sort of a snipper-snapper, I think."

"I tell you, sir," continued the squire, "that John Winthrop & Sons only want what is fairly theirs. The need of this insurance money may ruin our business, but if I thought the vessel's value could not be honestly given us, perish the money before I would take a penny of it! Our firm—"

"The squire is on too high a key for the good of his health. Doctor told him to be quiet, but he is dreadful stiff on any thing like honor," interjected the clerk as the squire paused to take breath.

"Our firm, resumed the old man in the inner office, "has a name for honesty—"

"Fiddle-sticks!" squeaked a mean little voice.

"All firms look after their own interests."

"The wretch!" observed the clerk to Bob.

"That's the agent."

“Do you want him stopped?” asked Bob, the sailor, rising from his seat. “I’ll just tell him we can’t have that.”

“Thank’ee! Sit down! The squire will chew him all up before he gets through with him,” said Thomas Alden.

“Yes, sir, a name for honesty,” shouted the squire. “Rather than take the money wrongfully, I prefer the welfare of the firm should go and stay where I believe the —— is, at the bottom of the sea.”

Bob hopped so quickly from his chair that the old clerk in alarm hopped from his also.

“What—what—did he say the name of that lost ship was, Mr. Alden? The ——?”

Bob’s excitement was so great that the name he now repeated was rather indistinct, but the old bald-headed clerk had heard it so often that he could make it out.

“That’s it, Bob.”

“Lost in what ocean?”

The clerk had no sooner pronounced the name than Bob shouted, “I’ll be back in a jiffy! Tell the squire to hold on—and—to keep—that grindstone—there—and—I—I—”

Bob’s last words were all cut off by the clos-

ing of the door, which in his excitement he shut with a bang. The noise in the outer room had now reached the inner room and aroused the wondering interest of the two men there. If Bob could have looked back through a thickness of wood, he would have seen two faces at the half-opened door of the inner office. One was like that of a sharp-nosed fox. Above it was that of an old, white-haired man trembling with excitement, but such a kindly, honorable look did it wear that a poor widow would have readily trusted with it her mites for safe-keeping. But Bob did not see the two faces. He did not seem to see any thing—the office stairs down over which he rushed—the side-walk, and Horace Haviland—who stood on it, shouting, “Ship ahoy! How are ye, Bob?”—or any of the buildings lining the streets that led to Bob’s house. As he flew in, he ran against his mother, who was rubbing the brass knocker on the front door, and almost pitched over a neighbor’s dog asleep at the foot of the hall stair-way.

“What’s the matter with Bob?” asked his mother.

“That boy gone mad?” said his father, who had just now thrust his head out of the door of

a lower room and saw Bob's entrance and also the flight up-stairs.

"And what has he got in his hand?" said the bewildered Sardinius, as he looked again and saw a rusty brown object in the hand of Bob, who was now descending the stairs.

Bob said nothing, but rushed round through the kitchen, into the back yard, and thence into the lane leading to Squire Winthrop's.

"See—see here, Ralph! Put on your hat and come down quicker than a harpoon after a whale," said Bob to his astonished shipmate, stretched out under an apple-tree.

"Down where, Bob?"

"Office!" shouted Bob, who had turned to leave Ralph. "Quick!"

"What is it? Fire?" asked Ralph.

"Yes, one kind of fire," shouted back the rushing Bob, and hurried off through the lane. Ralph understood his impetuous shipmate, and followed at once, knowing it was something that needed immediate attention. Bob was quickly back at the office of John Winthrop & Sons, and saying to Mr. Alden, "Come here, please!" hastened to the inner office, the door of which was still partially open, and abruptly knocked.

“Come in!” said the squire in tones that were weak now.

Bob entered. The old clerk followed. They saw the squire, with a face ashy pale, sitting at a large round mahogany table. Opposite him sat Samuel Strippings, the fox-faced agent.

“There!” exclaimed Bob, depositing on the table a relic of his trip to the Pacific, and carefully preserved by him. “That is a piece of the *Caspar* you have been talking about. I saw a part of the wreck—I can prove it—by Ralph Winthrop—who was off in a boat with me—and saw what—was left of the old thing. There!”

Bob now stopped to breathe. He also indulged in the comfort of wiping from his face the perspiration that was running down. The effect on the three spectators was electrical. The squire rose eagerly from his chair, and his tall form bowed over the mute witness from the Pacific.

“Indeed!” exclaimed Thomas Alden, rushing to the table.

“Pooh!” said Strippings. “What does that amount to! A piece of drift-wood—and nothing on it!”

“Nothing on it!” said Bob. “There’s a P on it; and if you had seen the rest of the vessel’s stern—supposing you know what part of the vessel that is—you would have seen, on one side of the P, a C and an A and an S. On the other side were A and R. C-A-S-P-A-R, *Caspar!*” shouted Bob.

“Just *you* saw it, or pretended to see?” sarcastically remarked Strippings.

“No, sir!” thundered Bob.

“No, sir!” added another voice quietly. It was Ralph, who, unobserved, had come in. He then proceeded to detail the account of that night’s experience on the wide Pacific when he and Bob were adrift, and fully explained about the wreck. “As for the name, *Caspar*, I saw it myself, and I can testify that this P”—Ralph here laid his hand on the dumb witness from the Pacific—“was a part of the name.”

At the young men’s request, Captain Granby came and testified that, while he did not personally visit that remnant of the *Caspar*, he saw it from the deck of the *Andromeda*. The result was that the insurance company decided to pay Squire Winthrop his claim; much to the mortification of Strippings but to the joy of

Squire Winthrop and all his friends. The wreck was not a wreck after all.

“And it will be a good thing for you, Bob. The squire won’t forget it!” declared his father eagerly, for nowadays he took a quickened interest in every thing, and especially in the plans of his “plucky sailor-boy,” as he called Bob. It was good to see how the father seemed to take a new lease of life, once more fondly planning and once more deeply enjoying. “Bob, I feel better,” he would say. Bob’s coming was like the strong, steady blowing of the sea-wind after a long stretch of August heat; reviving and invigorating.

He now dreamed of Bob’s better prospects for life, arguing that Squire Winthrop, in gratitude to Bob, must necessarily take him into his office.

“Yes,” reasoned the father, “I know the squire would like to have a Winthrop in the firm and succeed to his business, and Bob has got Winthrop blood in him.”

The discussion of Bob’s future so aroused Bob’s father that he even ventured out of doors again, limped on his cane as far as the door of Squire Winthrop’s office, and there he stood,

looking in and wondering how it would seem if some day he should see Bob mounting that ambitious flight of stone steps before the office door as a member of the firm.

“Yes,” reflected Sardinius Walker, limping away from the door, “Bob will surely get into the firm.”

Before, though, Bob could get into the firm, or any where near it, some one went out of the firm who was very essential to the success of Bob's plans. Squire Winthrop died.

CHAPTER XX.

ASSAULT ONE.

“THAT excitement about the *Caspar* did the squire no good,” said Dr. Bates. His vitality was at a low ebb, and any new demands upon the squire’s resources of strength seriously affected him. After the favorable decision about the *Caspar* he declined rapidly, and even contentedly. Prosperity seemed to make a reason for going rather than staying.

“I am an old man,” he said. “I know I must go sometime. Besides, I leave my business, my estate, in a satisfactory condition. I don’t need to live longer for that reason. There are some things which I would like to do personally for you and the Walkers and Ralph, but I can fix it all in my will. I will have my lawyer, Mr. Hatch, call to-morrow. I will get you to send for him at ten in the morning.”

He said this to Aunt Mary, his housekeeper, one evening. Hearing Alma’s voice down in the hall, he asked that she might be called

up. He requested that Ralph might be summoned.

"I like to see those young people often as I can," he told Aunt Mary.

He took Alma by the hand and greeted her very cordially, and when Ralph appeared on the opposite side of the bed, the squire welcomed him as heartily.

"It was a dreadful interestin' sight," Aunt Mary afterward told a neighbor, "to see those two young people in all their bloomin' beauty, and that old man between them a-holdin' their hands. It was near sunsettin', you know, and a kind of soft golden light playin' over his pale face and white hairs."

• It was the warm-hearted, quick-eyed Alma who first seemed to have a presentiment of a very near and significant change. She bowed her head and began to sob. Ralph noticed it, and the tears began to trickle down his cheeks.

"Come, come!" said the squire almost playfully, "I didn't call you young people in here to feel this way. You must be brave, and I know you will. As for me, I am an old man, and sometime I must go to my heavenly Father's home. He has the best home in the

universe, and to me it seems like a very simple thing to slip out of this home into that, you know. It is only a step over the threshold of a door gently swinging back. Death is kind." He paused for a while. "You two," he said, "must always be good friends."

He looked from one to the other, and said he would not keep them any longer. He told his housekeeper he would like to look off upon the sunset, and, as he felt very well, that the nurse—a man from the town hospital—might leave him for the night. Lying on his side, he could look off upon the western sky, where it seemed as if his heavenly Father were building a beautiful door to the everlasting home. When they went to the squire in the morning, he did not stir, he did not speak, he did not open his eyes. He had passed within the beautiful door.

"Why, I do believe he has gone!" exclaimed Aunt Mary.

Yes, gone, but leaving in the very peace and beauty of the face a silent sign that the late tenant of this imperfect, perishable body had passed to that which is complete and imperishable. He had gone to the Father's House.

The squire's death made a change in the plans

of many people. Bob felt that his prospects were suddenly and deeply clouded. The squire had not accepted him formally as a clerk, but it was thought that he would. In a few days after the squire's funeral, Bob's hopes, that had begun to sink, rose again.

"Father," he said one day on his return home from the business street of the town, "I met Mr. Hatch, Squire Winthrop's lawyer, and he told me that Thomas Alden would continue the business, and I know Thomas will need help, and I will go down and call on him."

Mr. Alden did not receive Bob so cordially as on a previous occasion, when the young sailor made known his desire for a clerkship.

"So you want to be a clerk?" remarked Mr. Alden, rather coolly.

"Why, yes, sir; I thought that was understood."

Mr. Alden played with his penholder, as if undecided what to do or say.

"Bob," he at last remarked, "I don't like to speak of it, but yesterday, somebody else applied for the situation, saying he was in the family, and so on. He left his card. You know him?"

Bob, to his surprise, read this name: "Stephen Winthrop Wyckham."

"He want the place? That fellow!"

"So he says, Bob; and, what is more, when I told him that you had applied for the situation—now you will not be offended because I am frank?"

"O, go on, Mr. Alden."

"When I told him that you wanted the place—and let me say I also added that I wanted you to have it—he said, 'You don't want a thief?'"

Bob twisted round in his chair nervously.

"'Of course I don't,' I told him. 'Well,' he said, 'he stole a dollar from me on board the *Andromeda*, and I can prove it.' Said I, 'That is a pretty serious charge; and you can prove it, can you?' Without hesitation he said he would, and he promised to call again this afternoon at three. I want you to be here, and I told him, in fact, you must be notified, and a note has gone to you."

"I would like to face him on that charge," said Bob. "I have been wanting to see him. He spent one night at the Willoughbys', but saw fit to go away early in the morning, and I did not know he had turned up."

“He is stopping at the Bedford House, he says. He has been out of town.”

Bob now detailed to Mr. Alden the affair of the finding of Steve's dollar in his mitten, and added, “I allow that it seemed to be against me, but God knows I am innocent. One of two things is true: either the dollar was tucked away in my mitten by an enemy who on the voyage got access to my chest, or somebody tucked the dollar in before leaving port.”

“Who gave you the mittens?”

“My sister, sir—or they came through her.”

“Doesn't she know any thing about it?”

“Nothing, sir. She says she didn't put the dollar in. Last night she raised the point whether the man who did give them, Charlie Habermann, might not know something about the dollar.”

“Why, that is not improbable.”

“No, sir; but then Charlie did not say any thing about it, and my sister did not put the dollar inside his present. However, I thought I would ask him.”

“You do so, Bob.”

“I will ask him now.”

“I would, and come at three.”

Charlie Habermann was in his store. His

stock was as much of a pudding as ever, and as a fleet of fishing vessels had arrived in the lower harbor and would soon send a swarm of customers up to the stores, his goods would be thrown into new confusion.

"I stopped you on the street one day and thanked you for a pair of mittens you gave a sailor-boy through Alma when he went to sea."

"Dat shailor-boy welcome!"

"I know it. I didn't tell you at the time that a dollar found in them made me trouble. Somebody claimed the money as his and said I stole it."

"No such ting!"

"Of course not. I wonder if you perhaps did not put the dollar inside," said Bob, a look of hope spreading over his face.

"My hands put no money in dose mittens."

The look of hope vanished from Bob's features.

"Well, that leaves the mystery deep as ever. I suppose I must go to Alden and tell him."

"Alden? In Winthrop's office?"

"Yes, I want a situation there, and Alden says he had a caller who has been accusing me of stealing the dollar in the mittens. The same

rascal followed me on the sea and now pursues me on the land."

"Robert, you keep shtill. You can go pack on your crachter. You jest shtay shtill and holt on dere. I will go and see Alden."

Muttering away, the store-keeper hurried off, while Bob went home wondering what Habermann, in his ignorance, could say that would help his cause in the office of John Winthrop & Sons.

"Joost de woman I want," said Habermann to Mary Haviland, whom he met before the Winthrops' office. "Now, come up-shtairs."

"You want me, Mr. Habermann?"

The bewildered Mary followed her leader, and the two stood before Mr. Alden.

"Now, Mishter Alden, you want to know if Bob shtole?"

"O, is that it? I was curious to know what you two wanted."

"Now, Mary, put on your tinking cap."

Mary in her perplexity stared out of her great gray eyes.

"You go pack to Bob's shailing away."

She nodded her head.

"You remember one fine pair of mittensh I gabe him?"

Again she nodded.

“A shailor more den half troonk came to my shtore one day, and bought some tings and paid me a tollar wid a crosch on it, and I tole you to take dat tollar and go to Bob’s house and get dose mittensh and slip de tollar in and say nottings and nebber say nottings—you remember dat?”

“O, yes, yes! That is so, Mr. Alden.”

“I didn’t put de tollar in, Mishter Alden. Bob didn’t shtear. Mary, she put de tollar in.”

“Well, well,” said the old bald-headed clerk, “things happen queerly in this world. Guess Mary didn’t know that dollar was making so much trouble.”

“Why, no, Mr. Alden, I didn’t know what it was that made the trouble; and there I was going round trying to comfort Alma! And I felt I must keep my word not to tell about the dollar, you know. Must keep my word!”

Mary’s eyes were snapping, Charlie Habermann’s face was joyfully beaming, and Thomas Alden looked on with sincere satisfaction.

“I am sorry I was making trouble and didn’t know it,” said Mary.

“You might shay I made it,” affirmed Charlie.

“No, Mishter Alden, I tell you what made de trouble; trink made it. If dat young man had been in his sênsches, he what traded his tollar wid me, he would have remembered where it went. No, it was de rume dat did it.”

That seemed to lift responsibility from Mary as well as Charlie; it was “rume” that did it—“rume,” whose fiery bondage does so much mischief, ever making the innocent suffer with the guilty, and sometimes for them.

Of course, Steve Wyckham was confounded, when he came to see, in behalf of Bob’s innocence, evidence that could not be overturned. He tried to load some of the blame on “Jim Solus,” whose memory had been faulty when he tried to enlighten Bob.

As for Bob, he was delighted with the news and speedily went into the old Winthrop office as Thomas Alden’s office-clerk. Father Walker declared, “Since Bob is a Winthrop, it is continuing the business in the hands of the family. That is what the Squire wanted.”

Alma also had her deep draft of satisfaction after the opening of this mystery that had been like a sealed fountain. The portrait in the hall alone looked unhappy. It still scowled, and

threatened, and seemed to say, "You don't belong here ; I do."

"We are happy," said Ralph Winthrop, who came to the house to rejoice with the Walkers, "but that portrait"—he pointed toward it—"doesn't seem to feel that way. It seems to shake its head at me."

Ralph soon found out that trouble was pressing hard on his heels, and Steve Wyckham was the bull-dog that was pursuing Ralph and savagely barking.

CHAPTER XXI.

CLIMBING A GENEALOGICAL TREE.

“YOU see, Ralph,” observed Mr. Hatch, a keen-eyed lawyer with full, sympathetic voice, “I thought we could talk things over in my office better than anywhere else.”

“Yes, sir,” replied Ralph, looking round on the room. It had a shut-in look, the long, narrow windows being half hidden by the encroaching book-shelves.

“Well, hem—m—m! It is about your grandfather’s will, of which I am the custodian. Of course, you know that he is not just your grandfather.”

“O, yes, sir, I understand that. I am a distant relative, and called him grandfather for the sake of convenience. I have been living with him a long time. He was the same as a grandfather to me.”

“Yes, I saw that, and he intended to make a new will and mention you definitely in his bequests. I say that he *intended* to do it, for he

told me what was in his mind, and the very day we found him dead I expected to make that new will. As it is, he left nothing but a will twelve years old, and of which I have been the keeper ever since his health was so feeble. In that he remembers his housekeeper, his church, his town—good idea, you know, to remember Church and State, for it shows a man to be appreciative of those conditions which—

“Yes, sir,” said Ralph.

“Which have helped make him. Then he left the rest of his property to be divided among his relatives. He had few relatives living. He specified the children of your real grandfather, one such heir being your father. The latter has since died; his brother and sister, who were unmarried, have died also, and you are the descendant in that branch now living. The squire in a new will would have definitely mentioned you and others, but you know that some people dislike very much to distribute their property. They would rather leave it to the provisions of the law made for all such cases. So you see you are not mentioned in that old will, made out only a month before you came into the squire’s home. However, he intended to give you ‘the brick

block,' and in a new will it would have been so assigned. In a new will he would have mentioned other heirs. Can you imagine whom?"

"Bob Walker says he has Winthrop blood in him, and I hope it is true."

"He is right. No doubt about it. The Walkers would have been specified in the new will. You see, the squire's father, John, an opinionated kind of old fellow, insisted upon it that the Walkers were not connected with the Winthrops; that a certain asserted marriage whereby they—the Walkers—came into the line, or, as you might say, were grafted upon the family tree, was not legal. Old John always meant to do the fair thing, but he was a very set man, and he could not seem to see that a Walker was a Winthrop. His son had his father's prejudice, but in a singular way Sardinus Walker came across an old Winthrop genealogy, and the squire hired him to copy it. In that copy the squire saw evidence that a Walker was a Winthrop, and he acknowledged it to Sardinus, and in the new will, doubtless, they would have all been mentioned. He thought a good deal of the Walkers, especially Alma, and,

feeling that they were his kin really, helped them.

“As it is, there is only this old will, in which the intention was to remember all legal heirs, I believe; and I must take the will to the court whose duty it is to look after estates, and it will do the right thing and distribute the property.”

“Well, sir, that is agreeable to me. It is more than I deserve.”

“Only, the brick block you can't claim.”

“O, sir, I am not particular. I am very glad the Walkers are heirs.”

“So am I. It was a good thing Sardinus Walker did when he found and copied the old genealogy. Shows when a man is sick he may yet be good for something. The Walkers are very worthy people.”

“Yes, sir. Bob's a particular friend of mine.”

“That Alma is a beautiful girl,” said the lawyer.

Ralph did not say any thing, but coughed abruptly and changed the subject.

“Shall I tell the Walkers?” Ralph asked.

“Tell them what? I was speaking about Alma—nice girl, you know.”

Ralph blushed and coughed again.

“ I mean, sir—the will, sir.”

“ O, about the will, Ralph? I told Sardinus a little—just gave him a hint—yesterday, but you can tell all that I have told you, if you wish. I have had no good opportunity to see any of the Walkers, and you can tell all you know about the affair. Say also that I shall see them.”

Ralph made haste to discharge this agreeable duty, and it occasioned a jubilee at the Walker home. When he had gone, Billy remarked :

“ Too bad Ralph loses the brick block ! ”

“ I expect Alma will make that all right,” observed Ted.

“ No,” said Billy, “ I don’t believe she would do any thing for him. She—”

“ Now, young people,” said Alma energetically, at the same time letting a rich screen of curls fall over her face, “ there is to be no selfishness in this family—”

“ She would give it all to him,” shouted Billy.

“ I am going to give *you*—leave to go out of this room. I have a job ; that is what I was going to say. I want to clear up my room, dust and clean it, and so on ; and I want you

two to move the furniture out into the hall, please."

The two boys started at once for up-stairs. Alma had been successful in inculcating the idea that all service at home is a privilege, to be promptly, not hesitatingly, accepted and discharged.

"Boys," called out Alma, "when it comes to the bureau in my room, take out the drawers and move them separately, and you can do the whole more easily."

Bob still lingered with Alma, and the two talked about the good fortune that was likely to come to the Walker family.

"I have thought of one thing, Alma. The old will left by Squire Winthrop gave his property to relatives now dead, intending to reach all heirs, and Ralph and we are the only ones who now seem to be in existence and able to claim any thing. I have been thinking of this possibility: what if a new relative should turn up?"

"That might be unfortunate for the rest of us, Bob, though I think he should have his share."

"O yes, of course. It is just a fancy I had."

Sometimes "fancies" turn out to be very hard, obstinate facts, and that which is unlikely, only possible, becomes the actual. The next day Mr. Hatch called, and, after stating more definitely what had already been told in general by Ralph, said :

"I—I don't wish to bring any bad news, but do you know that another claimant of Squire Winthrop's property has turned up?"

"No, sir," replied Bob. "Alma and I had that thought in our minds. It was only a thought, as people are apt to imagine every thing; but you say it is really so?"

"Really so; and he makes a big grab. If he could have his say, he would take three quarters or four fifths of all that the squire left. He especially claims the land on which the brick block rests."

"Does Ralph know it?" asked Bob.

"Not yet," said Mr. Hatch, "but he will find out soon. I thought I might see him here. To your father I told it on the street. Then he claims a valuable field which the squire really did give to Ralph. He seems to be aiming at Ralph especially."

"Why, who is it?" asked Alma.

“He writes his name Stephen Winthrop Wyckham.”

Alma and Bob looked at one another in astonishment.

“Indeed!” said Bob. “Then he hasn’t got through following us! He is the one who charged me with theft.”

“O, that the one? Then he does not seem like one who would be very likely to be a scrupulous opponent. I want to get information. I want to get hold of the Winthrop genealogy. This fellow claims that he is descended from somebody who married into the Winthrop family away back—I don’t know how far—and he claims land to right and left as one of the descendants from that marriage, and he wants his share of the other property in buildings and ships any way. The land—as for that, he says, it was illegally wrested by one of the Winthrops from that ancestor. So he thinks he has a double claim. You see, he has got a lawyer who will turn over every stone to get at facts, and—”

“Who?” asked Bob.

“Strippings.”

“An insurance agent?”

“He was until the affair of the *Caspar*. The

company felt at the time that he was showing qualities they could not afford to give wages to. In other words, it was hurting them to keep in their employ that kind of a character; and he has gone back to the law, a profession which, unfortunately for the rest of us, he studied for, years ago. Now, I wonder who is good at climbing genealogical trees? Who can get up the Winthrop tree and overhaul the branches?"

"What do you want up in that tree?" asked Alma. "I will ask father to step in. I heard him coming in from the street just now. He has been climbing the tree."

Sardinius Walker came into the room, bearing an old musty volume, in response to that request to be present.

"Squire Hatch, if I can do you a good turn, I will," said the bearer of the records.

"It will be a good turn for all interested in the property, and especially for Ralph. I want to find out about John Bevan. Do you remember seeing any thing about such a name? This Stephen Winthrop Wyckham I have just told the young people about claims to come from him."

"John Bevan? John Bevan?" said the man,

climbing the genealogical tree and turning over the leaves time had stained and dusted. "I have seen his name."

"Have you?" said the lawyer eagerly.

"Wait a minute, sir. Wait, Mr. Hatch."

"This John Bevan made much trouble for the Winthrop family when he was alive. He is an old hand at making trouble, so I have heard. What have you got?" asked the lawyer.

"John Bevan!" said Sardinius Walker, giving his information like a judge reading a law opinion. "John Bevan! O, here he is! Says John Bevan married into Simon Winthrop's family, but it doesn't say whom he married. Simon's children are here--James, his wife and children, Joseph, and so on. Huldah, she married, but it does not say whom. Huldah left no children. Very imperfect record there."

"It does not seem very complete," remarked the lawyer, looking at the yellow, discolored leaves. "This is the old genealogy. The copy you made--"

"The squire took it, but it is just this, you know, and I was sort of keeping it when he died."

“Well, from this it seems that John Bevan came into the family, married, and yet it does not say whom.”

All this time the words “John Bevan,” “John Bevan,” were echoing in Alma’s ears.

“Where have I seen John Bevan’s name?” she thought. “O, it is that portrait!”

She sprang up from her chair, flew into the hall, and planted herself before the picture.

“John Bevan, I want information about you!” said Alma.

John Bevan only looked over his shoulder and scowled as usual, saying, “You don’t belong here; I do.”

Hark! Alma’s brothers in the upper hall, who had been taking her furniture out of her room, were now shouting about something.

“J-o-h-n!” said Billy.

“That spells John,” said Ted.

“B-e-v-a-n!” again called off Billy.

“That is ‘Be-van,’” affirmed Ted.

“John Bevan!” thought Alma, and up the broad stair-way she raced.

“O, boys, what have you got?”

Ted held up a piece of very aged paper: “We found it in your drawer, Alma.”

“O, to be sure; I forgot about that! Do let me see! ‘John—Bevan—married—Huldah—Winthrop!’” she slowly read.

“Huldah had no children, the genealogy says,” thought Alma, and then she went like a bird down-stairs.

“O, I have got it!” Alma shouted. “Every body, come here!”

She reached the portrait, and there she halted, holding up the slip of paper, and looking toward the picture.

Ted and Billy were the first to respond to Alma’s invitation, and raced down-stairs. Out of the sitting-room door limped Alma’s father. Bob quickly passed his father, and Mr. Hatch and Mrs. Walker made as good speed as possible, for they had all heard Alma’s voice. By the picture stood Alma. It was a most interesting scene. That old figure in the portrait was frowning at this young girl standing triumphant, defiant, holding up this slip of paper. There were beauty and youth and truth all challenging, “You are an old deceiver. You have hung on that wall long enough, a big pretender. Your race died with you. You were not a Winthrop in the first place. You gave to the

world none of that name or any name. You old impostor! come down!”

The sun just then entered the hall, and its golden light crowned the hair of Alma, illuminated her face, and made an aureole investing all her form whose attitude was that of victory.

“That’s John Bevan!” said Alma decidedly.

“O!” exclaimed Mr. Hatch. “The old picture that Squire Winthrop said nobody knew any thing about! The very John Bevan I want to find out about!”

“There it is, sir! This fell out of the picture one night, and I picked it up.”

She handed him the aged slip.

“‘John — Bevan — married — Huldah — Winthrop!’” slowly read the lawyer. “And Huldah is the one that had no children. Climbing the genealogical tree brought down some fruit. That disposes of Stephen Winthrop Wyckham’s claim. End of that!”

“The squire seemed to think it was probably somebody in the family, and did not like to disturb the picture. The family seemed to think a good deal of it,” observed Sardinius Walker.

“Well, there are many old humbugs in this world, and I am glad the nonsense in this gas-

bag has been pricked," said the lawyer. "I think I shall have to take the picture down any way from the wall, and ask Miss Alma to let me have that bit of evidence also which she has in her hand. I want to lock them both up—the picture and the slip—with her permission, for safe-keeping. I want you all to show that you are good at keeping a secret, and please say nothing about this. I think when—when I bring this picture into court, and this added evidence, it will make an interesting scene and story. I don't want Strippings to get hold of this, but will lock it up."

The lawyer prophesied accurately. The picture in court, the evidence of Alma, interested the judge and every body else exceedingly. Mr. Hatch also had on hand other testimony about Steve of a damaging nature, but Alma's story, as she stood in her beauty beside the old picture, was the feature of chief interest. Strippings could do nothing. The case went against the pretender. The old portrait never went back to its former honorable position, but was banished to a dark hole in the garret. There it sulked in the gloom, but nobody cared. The one least mindful was the young lady that the

portrait had frowned upon as if she had no place in the Winthrop line, and if she had, would only bring disgrace to it. Ah! the beautiful Alma only brought honor to the name of Winthrop, though she did overwhelm with shame the name of Wyckham, and, by way of association, that of Bevan. An impostor was routed from the hall where he had reigned like a rightful king. In the old house Alma and her kin remained, and when the squire's property was distributed they were generously remembered.

CHAPTER XXII.

FROM GOOD TO BETTER, FROM BAD TO WORSE.

CHARACTER does not remain stationary. To one desirous of improvement it may seem as if he were making very slow progress, but some progress he *must* make. If he have the better desire, he will surely strengthen some good impulses, and weaken others that are wrong. If one lack the better desire, it may seem to him as if he could not be making fast progress in evil, but some advance in the wrong direction he will make. The latter development is inevitable, as much as the growth of a poison-plant that is unchecked, but is allowed to receive daily baths of sunshine and nightly baths of dew. Two sets of people illustrated the above principle. On one side was Bob. He had come already out into the light of the Saviour's presence, and could say that he was Christ's and Christ was his. Ralph, too, was on that side. The disposition of the squire's property had been so arranged that Ralph was

now in possession of "the brick block," but Ralph's desires did not strengthen in the direction of money-getting. The question looming up into ever greater prominence before him was whether he ought not to give himself to the ministry of Christ.

Alma and others were on the same side as Bob and Ralph, but in none was the fact of a right development more strongly emphasized than in the case of Horace Haviland. As his mother was growing infirm, he concluded to remain at home, and found steady employment in one of the fish-houses down by the wharves. He knew his weakness.

"Awful weak," he would say, "but I'm just looking up. My strength is all above me."

So Horace held to the way of right-doing, and his walk in it was more assured. His sister believed the world would yet see what a great hero was hidden in her brother.

On the other hand, there were those illustrating the fact of the continuous development of a character surrendering itself to its evil impulses. Steve Wyckham grew more grasping, envious, selfish, malicious. At times, his evil face would be seen in Oldburyport, and yet his form never

shadowed the threshold of the door of any relatives. They did not care to see Steve. Another evil nature asserting itself more positively was that of Strippings. His failure to seat Steve in the Winthrop chair of possession was a bitter defeat to him. For some reason Steve had an idea that Ralph might have helped him assert a good claim to participation in the Winthrop estate. He had sent a mysterious letter to Ralph hinting at a "union of interests," and Ralph pitched the letter into the fire. Steve vowed he would make Ralph "smart for such treatment."

Another year went by. Summer passed away. As the months moved on and brought the world into the midst of snow-drifts below and the flaming Northern Lights above, it brought Christmas also. Heaven seemed to descend, and where it touched the earth it left the golden foot-print of Bethlehem. Our young people in the Walker and Winthrop circle yielded themselves to the gracious influences coming down out of the skies. It brought to Bob a new idea of God's mercy, God's pity, God's interest in humanity, set forth in the human history of our Saviour. Bob's trust in God grew under the

stimulus of these thoughts, and his sense of obligation was sharpened also. He stood up in the old church at home this Christmas-tide, and confessed Christ as his Saviour. Ralph, too, was influenced by the beautiful memorial season, and he told his friends of his purpose, now matured, to consecrate himself to the ministry of Christ. Horace Haviland had a fresh conception of the significance of Christ's mission: that it not only meant a cross for that Saviour, but for all the world, and for Horace Haviland. The very symbol of the cross affected him as never before.

"That is the sign," he said to himself more than once, "of what Christ did for me, my hope and my life, and I've got a cross to carry. I've got to deny myself."

How Christmas affected other persons in this story—Steve and his lawyer, Strippings—we shall see.

It was a week after Christmas when Horace Haviland met a tempter. It was outside the door of a place where the chief tempter is apt to have his head-quarters, a run-saloon.

"Horace," said some one, using the blandest, most cordial tones, "where have you been, old feller? I have missed you a long time!"

“Why,” continued this ardent acquaintance, “I have really missed you.”

It was Steve Wyckham. He had not been in Oldburyport recently.

“O, I’ve been round same as ever,” replied Horace.

“You look cold—nipped, in fact. This winter weather doesn’t agree with you. Now you want something warm, I know.”

“No, I thank you.”

“Come in, come in! I don’t mean any thing strong, but just coffee—coffee and oysters, say. Fact is, I have a job for you, and you can make a lot of money out of it. Come, we will talk it over. Coffee and oysters, why, that will cheer us both up!”

“Well-l,” said Horace irresolutely, “no harm in that.”

He knew that there was harm in stepping within a circle of temptation.

“Of course not! No harm! Come along!” said Steve.

Steve took Horace by the arm and drew him into the saloon.

“Coffee and oysters for two!” he shouted, motioning Horace into a little retreat partitioned

off from the main saloon by a red curtain. Steve stepped to the clerk behind the counter, whispered a word or two, and came back to Horace. When the coffee arrived, Horace noticed at once its peculiar flavor. It was not at all disagreeable to him, but the very opposite.

“Coffee tastes good, Steve.”

“Ha-ha! Of course it does.”

“And that job!”

“O, I will tell you. Drink away!”

Horace knew that he had done wrong in venturing into such a place, and conscience was uneasy. Then the flavor of that coffee; it was satisfactory to an old craving, and for that very reason unsatisfactory to conscience. He said suddenly to himself, “Brandy in that?” He looked at Steve.

“What—what!” he muttered. “What is that, Steve?”

“All right!” asserted Steve. “We will have some more, and oysters hot, too. You look like a tired, hungry man. You ought by good rights to take something stronger. O, about that job! And let us have something really warming, just as medicine. It is all right as medicine.”

How many people have gone wrong, gone to ruin, on that medicine-track!

In that moment Horace felt weak as a child. He had suddenly come before a pit, open and filled with hot flame, and into it were going all his good purposes, his prayers, his past victorious record, to be seized, consumed, destroyed. His old mother's entreaties to him to be firm, and Mary's fond encouragement, were going into the same furnace. The hour threatened to be fatal. Suddenly he looked at the wall opposite him. A bracket projected from this wall, carrying an ornament, and the lines of its shadow made the form of a cross. It was accidental, for the saloon-keeper would have forever prevented its occurrence had he known it. Horace saw that humble but powerful sign. If the cross had been lifted, if it had become a hammer and had smitten Horace, he could not have been more deeply affected. He was smitten, but it was love's gentle stroke upon his conscience, and that kind of blow is harder than any by hammer of iron.

"How much of a cross am *I* carrying?" he thought. "Where is *my* self-denial? What did my Saviour carry for me?"

He sprang to his feet. He set down his cup so violently that the jar threatened to break it. He rushed out of the saloon.

“Where—where—going?” asked the surprised Steve. “That job—you—know!”

He followed Horace to the door. Surprise was turning to anger.

“Come back! Don’t be a fool!” shouted Steve.

Horace did not heed him. He rushed on, turned a corner, and shrank into a little alley, and there, behind the projection of a brick wall secluding him from the notice of any passer-by, he knelt on the snow, which became his cushion, and, lifting his clasped hands to God, sobbed, “O, my Father, don’t leave me! Don’t leave me!”

How long he stayed, he knew not. When he had risen from his knees, he hurried home as rapidly as possible. Horace Haviland was notorious for his physical strength, but he crept into the house feeling weak as a little child. When he went out again, he did not venture near that saloon.

“Where is Horace?” wondered his sister Mary, the next evening about nine. “He ought

to be home by this time. Horace is prompt, you know."

"O," said her calmer mother, knitting away in her corner, "he has gone to meetin', may be. He will turn up in good order."

Mary listened keenly for her brother's step. She heard instead a warning bell-note, and then an excited cry out in the street.

"Mother, that is fire!" said Mary nervously.

Yes, above the house-roofs rolled the round, heavy notes of a fire-bell, and out in the street echoed those sharp, warning tones that never need an explanation, but awaken alarm whenever heard.

"Fire-r-r! Fire-r-r!"

"Where is it?" asked Mary, hurrying to the door and questioning a self-appointed herald of disaster.

"The brick block! Fire-r-r! Fire-r-r!" answered somebody.

Down the snow-heaped street ran the messenger of evil, at almost every step hearing an echo to his cry in the cry of another.

"There, mother, Horace has gone to the fire! He is a fireman, you know. That is where he

is," said Mary, returning to the snug, warm little kitchen.

"Where is the fire, Mary?"

"In the brick block, mother—the Winthrop block, you know. Only think of it!"

"In the brick block?" said her mother calmly, almost contentedly. The fire must be somewhere, and why not in the brick block? Old age is said to take life's mishaps in a mood calmer than that of younger years, and does—sometimes.

The bell-booming went on, the cries also of the fire-heralds. Mary stood all this as long as possible, and then said:

"There, mother, I can't seem to stand it! Could—could—you spare me if I go to the corner?"

From "the corner" of an adjoining street the brick block could easily be seen, all its long front, the stores below, the offices and hall above.

"Spare you?" replied old age. "O yes!" and Mary's mother went on knitting, quite reconciled to the fact that, if a fire must be somewhere, it had better be in the brick block than in many other places. Why should not Mary go? She

was young—only forty—and youth that likes fires might to be indulged.

“Yes, you may go, Mary.”

This excitable young female left old age very contentedly knitting in the corner that to her was a harbor of refuge from many storms.

The janitor of the brick block was in the habit of closing every thing above the first story by six, whenever the big hall in the building would not be needed that evening. Did he see any one stealing into Room Sixteen, an empty office, about half after five? This intruder had come from a rum-saloon, in itself a very suspicious fact. The janitor, though, did not notice any such entrance. At his hour for closing, he came to the door of this room and said, “I wonder how long ‘Sixteen’ will be empty! It is lonesome in there. Don’t like to have it so empty.”

All the while, in a closet of this office crouched a man. He was so fearful that in some way he might excite attention, he scarcely breathed.

“Empty!” said the janitor softly, turning the key in the door. The janitor locked other offices and the big hall itself, and then went down-stairs to the entrance-door, closed and

locked that. There was another door, a small one in the rear of the building, by which the hall and offices could be reached. It closed with a spring, and on the inside could be opened without a key.

The man who was crouching in that dark closet of Room Sixteen expected to leave the building by this small door in the rear. His expectations were not realized. When he had reason to conclude that the janitor was outside the building, he softly opened the closet door, stepped out into the empty room, and went to a window. This looked down into the street, where the lights in the shop-windows were already flashing. The man could see the dark forms of people hurrying past these lighted windows, and he said, "I will give people in the street something unusual to think about soon. I will give the owner something to think about. The insurance on this block has run out and not been renewed. What is left standing by twelve o'clock to-night won't be worth much."

He returned to the closet. He opened a traveling-bag filled with combustibles. With hammer and chisel he broke as gently as possible a hole in the plastering above a shelf, and there

started a fire. The mischievous flames darted into the space in the rear of the hole. It was directly under a stair-way. Here was a very strong draft, and the space under the stair-way communicated with two other flights above. The flames with swift red feet climbed the rounds of this long, secret ladder.

“Now I will go,” said the incendiary. “The alarm will soon be given.”

Rubbing his hands, chuckling away, exulting over the people’s wonder when they saw the flames breaking out of the doomed building, he went to the office door and laid his hand on the door-knob, that he might turn it and pass out. He could turn the knob, but could not open the door! It was locked firmly. An exclamation of disappointment accompanied by an oath broke from his lips. He pulled on the door-knob. To his increased disgust the knob came off.

“However,” he said, “I am not to be balked this way. I will pry the thing open. How this smoke pours out!”

The room was filled with smoke, and he could hear the crackling of the flames, and hark! “Fire-r-r!” “Fire-r-r-!” was the alarm soon echoing out in the street.

He went to work on the door more anxiously, pushing, tugging, straining, trying to get a chisel under the door and at the side of the door, and in some way wrench it open. It was a heavy door, for the room had once been used as a banking-office.

He thought of a hammer he had in his bag, and amid the thickening, suffocating smoke, he swung this hammer against the panels of the door. He could hear the echoes of his blows, as, like a madman, he drove his hammer against the thick panels. It was of no use. Outside, he heard an increasing tumult. People, in the absence of the janitor with the keys, were trying the door leading up to the offices and hall, furiously banging away on the wooden barrier.

What if they got in, and found him and his bag in this empty office? What could he say? He stopped pounding.

Ah! they had got in somehow, and were rushing into the building to drag out of the offices their furniture, provided they could reach all of the rooms. Would some one say, "There is, perhaps, some valued piece of furniture in 'Sixteen!' Have it out?" What if they came,

and "it" should turn out to be an incendiary! Should this "valued piece of furniture" meet them, hammer in hand, and drive them back? Would it not be better to feel along the walls, find a nail that might have been driven there, wrench it out, and then nail up the door that they might not get in? But could he stay, this man that did not dare to go out? The smoke was so suffocating that he was obliged to drop on his hands and knees, and breathe close to the floor. He crawled to a window somehow, managed to raise it, and O, how grateful was the current of pure, cold air that came streaming into this room like a furnace! The device that gave him a chance to breathe told him also how great the excitement was outside.

"There are the engines!" he said. "How the men shout!"

He might have added, "Here comes the water!" for a gush from a hose-pipe, directed against an upper story, missed its aim and came under the window-sash he had raised, drenching his face. Were those outside trying to beat him back into the fire that was steadily rushing toward him? Must he roast in that furnace? The thought was terrible to him. The closet

full of flame was discharging its surplus fire into the office. Was there no escape for him? Was that the end of evil-doers, to be caught and destroyed in the flames they themselves had kindled? He did not give the thought much room in his mind, but he could not help its entrance. Should he show himself at the window and entreat those without to save him? Who would be friendly to the incendiary? Should he go back to the door and pound on it again, hoping he might be heard? He did not know as he could reach it. If he reached it, he did not know as any body was in the corridor to rescue him; all that he could hear now was the crackling of the flames—and how thick the smoke was! Come what might, he must have air, he must have life. He raised the window all that was possible.

“Fire-r-r!” rang the alarm-cry, while the bells boomed, the engineers shouted their orders, and the streams of water from the pipes fell with a crash on the building. That which gave life to the incendiary gave life to the flames, for, fed by the inrushing current of air, the fire crackled and blazed with startling intensity. Under that opened window, crouching below its sill so that

people could not see his head, was that agonized wretch. What would he do?

The fireman saw that window opened so strangely, and a heavy stream of water now came crashing into the room. He incautiously raised his head, and a blow from the water almost stunned him. It was now a fight there at the window between the water and the fire, and in the center of the battle was that man in agony. It was hard to say which was the worse, the fire that was roasting him or the icy water of winter that was freezing him. For awhile the water was victor, and the fire seemed to retreat, but that was only in the center of the room opposite the window. The fire, now on both sides, grew hotter, the smoke more stifling, and then the flames rushed for the open window where their author was in one suffocating, consuming cloud which the water might pierce but could not conquer. Finally, the crowds of people below, the hundreds of eager spectators were horrified to see a form wriggling, struggling, fighting its way out of that furnace-door through the volume of water pouring in steadily. The hosemen under that window did not at first notice these struggles.

“Hold there!” shouted an engineer to the hose-men drenching that window.

“Stop your playing!” “Give over!” “What you up to? Don’t drown a man!” “Give him a chance!” were the outcries from the spectators.

The hose-men ceased to play at the window, and, unmolested, the man climbed out of the window and hung by his hands from the sill. The instinct to save life somehow, anyhow, was so strong that he was willing to take this serious risk. A shiver of horror went through the crowd, as when the breath of a rough blast sweeps across and ruffles the surface of a pond. The block was a tall one. This window was in the third story. The man, if he dropped, would fall directly upon a pavement of flagging-stone. How much longer could he cling to the window-sill?

Various expedients were suggested. Before they could be tried, the man might be in eternity. Mary Haviland saw all that was actually attempted. She saw two men making their way to this part of the building with a ladder. It was planted against the wall. One of the men mounted it.

"It is Horace!" she screamed. "God keep him!"

All the rest of the time, Mary Haviland held her folded hands up to God, while her eyes were fastened on her brother.

"Hold on!" he shouted to the man still clinging to the window.

The ladder was long, but it did not reach the man. If it had only been half a yard longer, the man's feet would have touched it, and as there was an ornamental projection just there in the wall at the right of the man, he could have steadied himself by it, when his feet rested on the ladder, and with care could have descended it. There was that little gap, though, between the man's feet and the ladder, and it seemed as fatal as if a chasm a mile wide.

"Steady the ladder!" shouted Horace.

A dozen pairs of strong arms must have been laid on that ladder, steadying its foot. What woman rushed to the firemen's help? Were not Mary's hands on the ladder?

Horace Haviland was said to be the strongest man in town. A big, broad-shouldered man. The boys loved to tell stories of his prowess. To them he was both Samson and Hercules in one.

Bracing himself in his footing on the ladder, helped by the ornamental facing to the wall I have mentioned, holding up his hands, he said, "Easy now! Don't be afraid! Drop!"

Some of the people turned their heads away. Mary Haviland still looked, still held up her hands, and it seemed to her as if God's hands were on the ladder steadying it, and God's hands were also helping her brother's hands reaching up toward the man.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" echoed a huge shout from the crowd, for in Horace Haviland's arms was the rescued man, and soon they both came down the ladder.

"O, thank God!" cried Mary.

She did not stop to see or hear further. It was enough. Horace was a hero. Her brother was the great man she had always believed him to be. The ladder was only the pedestal exalting him that in his true proportions he might stand out before the people. They must have all seen it. "They know it now!" she murmured.

The engines now resumed their playing on the building, while the rescued man slunk away from notice as rapidly as possible. He had not gone very far when a firm hand was laid on his

shoulder, and a voice said: "You are my prisoner."

The incendiary looked up in surprise.

"You may think it hard to be nabbed," said the police officer, "after your escape from that horror, but you are wanted for a theft over in Harrington."

"You—you are mistaken, and it's tough after gettin' out of that oven to be hauled up. You want another man."

"I want *you*, Steve Wyckham. I know you. Come along, this way!"

The two went to the police station.

Steve Wyckham was also wanted the next day for the firing of the brick block. Suspicion fastened on him, and he was tried for that incendiarism as well as for the Harrington robbery. It turned out that Strippings, who had some acquaintance with insurance offices, had told Steve that "the insurance on Ralph's block had expired without renewal." Before it might be renewed, Steve, anxious for revenge, vowed he would fire the building. He tried to induce Horace Haviland to undertake the job, and thought if he could fire Horace with rum, Horace could be induced to fire the building.

Knowing the horrible antecedents of rum, Steve did not credit it with too much demoniacal power, if he could only get it inside of Horace. Steve failed in his efforts, and then fired the building himself, only to find out that Strippings was wrong in the statement made about the insurance on the building. The insurance had been very promptly renewed by the young owner of the building, and it was sufficient to enable Ralph to restore the brick block to its former condition for effective service. Steve Wyckham had ample opportunity in jail to reflect upon the fact that bad impulses unchecked will develop into a character surely and steadily deteriorating.

What could be expected, on the other hand, in the lives of Sailor-boy Bob, Ralph, Alma, Horace, and others, trying to make good character into what was still better?

Bob, in the office of John Winthrop & Sons, established a reputation not only for enterprise, but integrity also.

Ralph in his studies gave promise of a life of exceeding usefulness in the ministry of God. The large-hearted, self-denying Alma, people said, would make that worthy help-meet for

Ralph which she promised to be. Horace Haviland in the path of temperance found a life opening into larger and larger possibilities of usefulness.

“ You have not said any thing about the *Andromeda*,” some one remarks. Ah, that dear old tub continued to make other voyages for John Winthrop & Sons, and brought back new resources of wealth. Sail on, *Andromeda*! Sail on!

THE END.



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